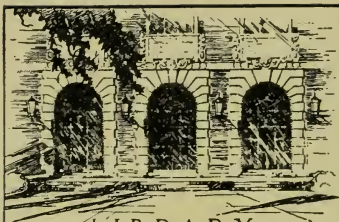


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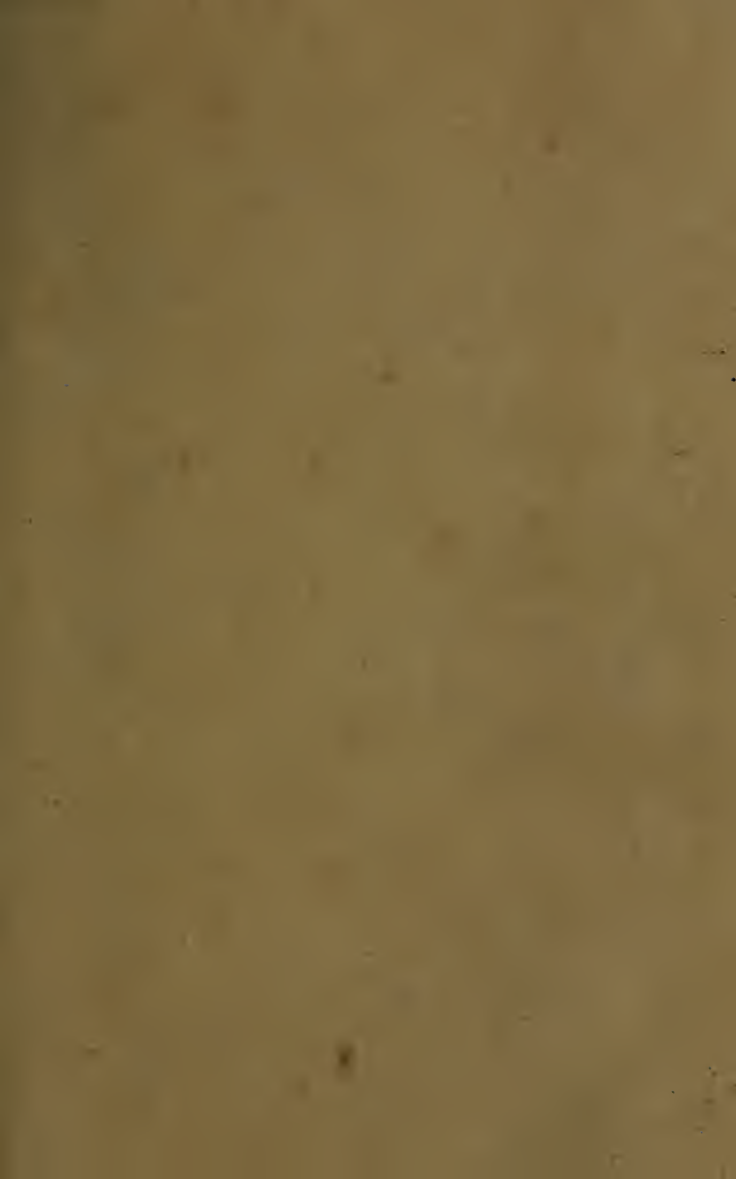


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FLORENCE:

OR

THE ASPIRANT.

A NOVEL,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

I.

LONDON:

WHITTAKER, TREACHER, AND CO.

AVE MARIA LANE.

1829.

LONDON

PRINTED BY C. AND W. REYNELL, BROAD STREET, GOLDEN SQ.

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FLORENCE.

CHAPTER I.

“MOTHER, are you sure we are right?” said a tall well-formed female, in an anxious undertone. “Are you quite sure this is the place?”

“Look at the cross—look at the cross,” was the brief and, as an accidental and unintentional listener imagined, harsh answer; but it was only the apparent harshness of abstraction and absence of mind, for the tenderest of mothers addressed the most affectionate and confiding of daughters.

The listener followed the pair until they, with many others, arrived at the end of a close narrow alley, when the senior lady stopped, and

going up to a man, asked him, if the presence of strangers would be deemed an intrusion.

“By no means,” said he; “that person will conduct you to a seat.”

The listener still kept close. “Are they of us,” thought he. “No,” was the response, not unmixed with regret, as he saw no outward sign of supplicating for a purified heart, before they should bend the knee in token of respect to the sacred and heart-touching representation of that death, which even, according to their own creed, ushered in eternal life to a lost world. “Why should I care?” thought he. “Surely there may be mercy for all;—but that slight figure betokens slight health.”

He continued to follow; and when their conductor put them into a pew immediately behind his own, he felt that his piety could not repress an ardent wish to see the face of the younger querist. But he had been trained never to turn round in a place of worship, and that in which he was seated, and from which he had rarely wandered, was so constructed that every face in it was opposite to the altar.

“Strange,” thought he, “that I should feel my mind thus diverted from my duty. Curiosity is indeed a baneful passion; no wonder that,

goaded on by a subtle tempter, our first mother sinned. My eyes burn in their sockets; and for what? To see if the face of this heretic is equal to her figure."

He compelled attention, made the right responses, attended to every sign of the cross, which is certainly observed in a manner so modest and unostentatious as to defy all those who say it springs from anything else than the soul-inspired conviction of what the cross has done for man.

The eloquent preacher commenced his energetic, authoritative, and yet familiar discourse.

"Surely," thought the youth, "I may now indulge in one glance."

But the pastor, who had just read the gospel to the festival of St Michael, at that moment uttered the words, "Why look ye after lying vanities? why suffer ye your thoughts to wander after the things that savour of death? Have ye not heard, and on the instant, that if thy eye scandalize thee, thou must pluck it out and cast it from thee?"

Our youth started, blushed, and with a beating heart leant his head on the bench before him. It was in vain that he endeavoured to compel a steady, unwavering attention; his ears drank

in mere sound, except when now and then a sentence seemed peculiarly adapted to himself, and recalled his thoughts from the slight waist, the comparatively broad shoulders, the fair skin which just peeped through the parted curls, and even the blue sash and muslin drapery of the interesting stranger. "I cannot endure this," thought he; "I shall look, if public rebuke should be my doom."

He had just raised his head, when his ear was greeted by, "Ah! I know it all; I can discern every look; I can decypher every blush; I can embody into words every unholy sigh of those, who, casting from them the innocence and simplicity of little children, are ingulfed in deadly sins. Think ye, that with a delegation like ours, with a vigilance that defies all but the imperious call of worn-out nature, that I cannot read your very souls?"

The youth did indeed sigh, for his tender conscience had suffered a conflict, and although his reason denied the fact, his feelings said, "He knows that I have had my mind diverted from the whole of this most sacred service, and that by one who is an alien. Away such unworthy desertion!"

It is true, that the authorotative eloquence of

this zealous preacher had become so familiar to his own proper auditors, that, remarkable as it might seem to a stranger, not a few could have been caught nodding. But on the young man he had particular claims, and to the flaxen-haired damsel all was new. She had too much sense to be caught by the ceremonies she witnessed previous to the discourse, and which to an unaccustomed and, it may be, uninformed observer, seem mere mummary; but when the elegant Jesuit turned him round at the very altar, and apparently without text, since no other was given out than the passage above alluded to, and after pausing so as to recollect himself, he uttered first a few calm remarks upon the virtues of humility and self-abasement; then describing as one who felt it, the act of bringing forward the little child, placing him in the midst, and declaring that of such was the kingdom of heaven; and after that, becoming vehemently warm, he contrasted the state of adults, especially in this corrupt age, with the purity of infants, and declared his right to watch over his flock, and his determination to do so, she felt her whole soul wound up in that sort of attention which makes the listener doubtful of the ears' capacity to hear the words of truth,

and that of the eyes to note every turn and gesture by which the eloquence is attended. But when he went on, and, in a sort of holy fervor, exclaimed, "Yes, my children, you should by this time know, that the man who for the love of this our true, holy, and universal church, has abandoned all that the world sighs for,—all that delights the ear, dazzles the eye, and gratifies every sense,—would willingly sacrifice himself for the eternal weal of the most worthless amongst you. And for you, my dear little children," turning to seventy or eighty boys and girls, who were his peculiar care—"for you, for your yet (as I may say) unfledged minds, what would I not do? O! if you knew the groans that I utter in private, the tears that I shed when no eye beholds—that your lips may never touch the cup of vice, and that you may never inhale one draught from the poisonous stream of heresy!"

While he uttered this in a tone of deep and melting pathos, the young lady—heretic as he would have styled her—responded by a deep and heavy sigh, and, almost breathless, leant back in her seat. This could not be resisted, and maugre all priestly authority and all holy fealty, the young man turned quickly round, and rested

his eager eyes on the unconscious aspirant. The priest had paused: the senior lady, though in general cold on these subjects, had been wrought up to something like enthusiasm, so that she neither heard the sigh of her daughter, nor saw the gaze of the youth. A momentary stagnation seemed to have taken place in the blood of each, and yet each mind was occupied in a different manner. The good priest was absorbed in his own zeal, while his ardent, speaking eyes still rested on his children, the children of his soul; the senior lady was carried back, by the view of the altar and sacerdotal ornaments, to the days of Aaron, and she might be said to enjoy a sort of chaotic trance. Jews, Chinese, Indians, Greeks, Romans, Christians, Turks, all swam before her sight; and, clasping her hands, she exclaimed internally, "God of wonders! can any of these be despicable in thy sight?" While the young warm-hearted maiden ejaculated, "O! that I might be adopted by that holy, elegant man!"

The young man had no time to embody a single idea, for he had merely caught a glimpse of half-closed eyes, pale cheeks, small Roman nose, pouting lips, and a luxuriance of beautiful hair, when he almost started at what seemed a fresh appeal to himself.

The priest had ceased to look upon the children, and sending his keen, piercing glance over his people, he exclaimed, "Turn your eyes where you ought—if you look not towards the appointed of God, refresh your sense of our claims upon you by looking on the representation of him who sealed our commission with his blood. Profane not this holy place by even a mental glance at aught earthly; for, however fair, however lovely, however pure as it may seem to corporeal perception, there is but one legitimate subject for contemplation here. Remember the lesson of the day. And well might he so exclaim, for if their little minds wander, it is after less gross vanities, and, rightly trained, we may stay the yet incipient eye before it dart with the keen glance of passion into the long and seemingly smiling avenues of sin, which alluring for a while leads us on to endless perdition. Arrest then your thoughts, and bestow them with a devoted intensity, at least while here, on your eternal interests."

"I shall not be rebuked again," said the youth to himself; and rousing all his religious energies, he succeeded at last in bringing an undivided attention to the rest of the holy father's injunctions, and became satisfied, that

what his own startled conscience had rendered personal, was intended for all, and grew out of the subject. His mind was now subdued, and in compliance with the general self-restraint he was used to, he departed from the place of worship without once looking upon his unconscious tempter. Indeed the service that follows the discourse is too sacred and solemn not to arrest levity itself.

The mother and daughter walked on absorbed in thought; the former cogitating, as before, on the immense variety in human opinion upon that subject of which all confess the importance, from the naked savage who gazes upon and worships the apparent sovereign of man, to him who has so rarified and sublimed his ideas as almost to doubt even the existence of that vast luminary.

The daughter's heart glowed with fervour towards a system which seemed to have in it the very tangibilities of religion; for here she found something to revive as well as to suggest holy feelings. She speedily ran over all that had passed before her eyes, and began to doubt, whether that which seemed mere unmeaning acting might not have under it some very important sign or symbol, that brought an acces-

sion of devout feeling, and kept alive that holy animation which she had now experienced for the first time. The incense still seemed to envelope her; her eye still rested on the impressive representation of the dying Saviour; and, at last, grasping the arm of her mother, she exclaimed, "That is the only true church." She again walked on in silence, but soon feeling her holy sentiments mingled with compunction for having been an involuntary listener to abuse of the Catholics, she once more pressed hard upon the arm of her mother, and said, "Do tell me of what they have been guilty."

"Hush," said her mother, in a low voice, "don't you see that we are surrounded on all sides? Let us get home, and I shall endeavour to explain what it is that we Protestants revolted from, and what we now rail at."

CHAPTER II.

A LOUD knocking at four in the morning roused the footman of the doctors Campian, who hastened to tell his senior master that a sick lady wanted his immediate attendance. "Block-head!" said the old gentleman, "Why did you not call my son? You know I never go out in the night."

"Yes, sir; but ——" and he approached close to his master, who replied, "Right, right; only you should have sent her elsewhere?"

"So I would, but she declared she would not stir without a doctor, for that her lady lay at the point of death, and —— But here she is—you had better let me call Mr Edmund."

"Yes — no — stop — What is your lady's name?"

"Stanhope, sir."

"Stanhope! O, safe enough: she lives in Park street;—Thomas, tell Edmund."

"She lives in Steel's place, sir."

"Ah! that alters the case. Stop, Thomas; I'll go myself—It is fair, I hope? What is the matter with your lady?"

"Violently sick, sir; do make haste, she was to all appearance in the very throes of death."

"Was it sudden?"

"Yes, sir, in a moment, I may say."

"Aye, her stomach—people will eat—How old is Mrs Stanhope?"

"Mrs Stanhope? Forty, I suppose."

"Forty! that alters the case again; I dare say Edmund may go. Thomas, call him; but stop a moment—Is she—"

"Dear sir, for God's sake come."

"Yes—she must have an emetic—there—but if she is threatened with fever, I must open a vein, and my hand shakes a little—Is she a widow?"

"Yes: but really, sir, this delay is cruel."

"A widow—but—forty. Yes, call Edmund—my hand shakes more than usual."

"My dear father," said a handsome young man, "why will you rise in the night? I am sure——"

"Tut!—You're sure—What makes you sure?"

"Well, then, I must go to another; what will my lady think, and you so near?"

The young man rushed out, and left his father to rail at the voracity of widows of forty, and the rash haste and impetuosity of youths under twenty-five.

“ I don’t know why, Thomas,” said he, “ but I never felt so uneasy before, and so averse to Edmund going out.”

“ You forget, sir, you were just the same last time, and you know the patient turned out to be a woman of sixty.”

“ Yes ; but the fewer risks we have run, the more remain in the cup. This widow may have a daughter—Fool that I was ! Run, Thomas, follow them close—Steel’s place is not two minutes’ walk from this—make your way in, and see that all is safe.”

Thomas was not slow to obey, but his speed, which was on the decline, was no match for that of his young master, who, having heard from an adjoining room all that passed, hastened to the relief of the sick lady.

He was received at the door of a small but genteel looking mansion by a lady whose face was enveloped in a large full night-cap, and her figure in a wide wrapping gown of grey silk, confined by a tasselled sash of the same colour ; and it appeared that even under the press of cir-

cumstances, such as having been alarmed by the sickness of an only child, and having waited in excessive anxiety for medical aid, she had still paid attention to her appearance; for the snow-white and uncreased borders of her cap could not have suffered from even half an hour's contact with her pillow, and the few flaxen curls which, in the style of novel-writing, might be said "to have escaped from their preparatory bondage," relieved her countenance from that half-scared, half-drowsy expression, so common on such occasions. She might be forty, but she was still in the very first style of the most exquisite fair beauty.

"In the name of God," said she, "what has detained you? My anxiety——But come——my poor Florence has paid dearly for her Popery."

"Her Popery!" said the youth.

By this time they were in the sick chamber, where a young lady, only more lovely than her senior because she was younger, lay pale and motionless on her bed. Her loveliness had however been left to care for itself, and indeed it required no adventitious aid, or rather it could bear all the deductions made by a disordered head-dress, as if she had suffered from heat, pain, and sickness. Her hands lay out motionless, like those

of a person who has been exhausted by a struggle; her parched lips were open, and her eyes presented the vacuity of one who is neither asleep nor properly awake.

The physician looked at his patient, felt her pulse, and then enquired after the symptoms; and on hearing them, questioned Mrs Stanhope as to the probable causes. She said, that perhaps they had walked rather too much yesterday, first in the heat of the day, and afterwards in the damp of the evening. Dr Campian looked earnestly at Mrs Stanhope, again counted her daughter's pulse, and said: "In addition to the causes you mention, I should suspect, from the violence of the sick paroxysm which you have described, that she must have eaten something that has disagreed with her. Did she not seem to nauseate any part of her food yesterday?"

"Yes; I recollect she shivered after having eaten half an egg; but, as she often eats a whole one without injury, I should rather imagine that the previous state of her stomach caused the aversion, than that it was occasioned by the food I speak of."

Dr Campian smiled, and Mrs Stanhope blushed. "We are not accustomed," said he, "to such accurate reasoning, especially from

——” He paused, and then continued—“ But why did you think it necessary to distinguish so nicely?”

“ Because, prepossessed with that notion, she might be led to abandon a wholesome and nutritious food. There is no end to the foolish likings and dislikings that originate in vague conjecture. But say quickly, do you apprehend any danger?”

“ None whatever. Hold up her head, and I am persuaded that after she has swallowed these drops the remaining irritation will go off; and tomorrow I hope she will be entirely, or at least nearly well.”

Having administered the medicine, Dr Cam-pian resumed his seat, and seemed anxious to renew the conversation. “ You are quite right,” said he, “ in tracing as accurately as possible the probable cause or causes of any disorder, but more particularly of sudden attacks; it is often owing to inattention in this respect, and sometimes to wilful concealment, that the skill of a physician is baffled. An old friend of mine used to say, that ‘ a faithful and distinct account of causes might be called living dissection!’— You spoke of having walked far, and in the evening damp; why should you expose yourselves to such risks?”

“We are not in the habit of nursing ourselves; they are poor constitutions which cannot stand at least a fair proportion of the climate assigned to them; and it is only by excessive chariness that we unfit ourselves for the casualties which all must be exposed to.”

“But—” and he looked at each alternately—
“you are both, if I may judge from complexion and figure, of a delicate frame and constitution.”

“So it is said; but where is the complexion, where is the frame, of which fatal prognostics may not be drawn? They are as rare as models for a statue. Of a dark face and spare figure we predict bile and melancholy; of the full and ruddy we foretell sudden revulsions. There is no end to human fears, and small benefit from human precaution.”

“But as I came in, you said something of Popery to your servant.”

Mrs Stanhope looked confused, blushed, and seemed inclined to remain silent, but at last said, “I spoke in spleen, and from the irritation of the moment; and perhaps there might have been something in the novelty, excitement, and even perfume, upon a person of very delicate nerves. I took her yesterday for the first time

to hear a Roman Catholic. If you ever heard Mr D'Alembert, you will not wonder that his vehement eloquence surprised us; and if, like my daughter, you have merely *seen* the pageantries of Popery, or like myself, seldom, you will not think it very strange, that we were both somewhat overcome by what we saw. Florence was particularly so; and when we came home, I observed that she was more pale than usual, and revolted, as I told you, from her simple dinner."

By this time the young lady seemed more easy; Dr Campian again applied his fingers to her wrist, and appeared lost in thought. "You were there for the first time?"

"Yes, for the first time."

"And Miss Stanhope was afraid that you had mistaken the place, and you desired her to look at the cross." He sighed, and then added, "You sat immediately behind me."

"Very likely; do you attend regularly there?"

"I do."

"Then I must apologise for my seeming disrespect; but, I assure you, it was only seeming, for few who are not Catholics have a more sincere respect for Popery than myself."

"Yet you spoke of its pageantries," said the youth mournfully.

“ True ; in all that has passed through human hands there must be error ; but I have a profound respect for your antique church.”

“ Because it *is* antique ; just as you would for a fine ruin.”

“ Yes, because it is a fine—I must not say ruin—a fine edifice.”

“ Alas ! that is the approval of taste, not of mind and spirit.”

“ Is not taste grounded in mind ?”

“ True, but *it* can exist without the sort of spirit to which I allude.”

Mrs Stanhope smiled, and perhaps feeling that more discussion had taken place than was necessary, she said, “ I can already perceive that Florence is much easier. See ! her mouth and eyes are closed, and she seems to enjoy something like refreshing sleep. Your drops have had a blessed effect.”

“ I believe,” said Campian, “ that nature would have resumed her office without my aid ; the worst was over before I came ; but I know, that there are few things more painful to suffer or to witness than intense sickness.”

Mrs Stanhope rose from her seat, and the physician, taking the hint, withdrew.

CHAPTER III.

OUR young physician had gone out perturbed, and he returned melancholy. Chance had conducted him to the very house of the person who had scarcely quitted his imagination for five minutes since he followed her into the chapel, and had by an effort avoided watching her steps as he came out of it. Dr Johnson has said, that there scarcely ever was a married couple who did not fancy that there had been something most peculiarly strange and out of the ordinary run of events in the manner of their first meeting. He ought to have added, that this reminiscence, and the smile of satisfaction which hovers on the lip of the husband when it is adverted to, are rarely to be remarked when three months have gone over the heads of the happy couple. “Do you remember,” my dear Stephen, said a young and very pretty wife to her husband,—“do you re-

member how vexed you were at the thickness of my veil the first day we met on the south promenade?"—"I remember that I was a fool at the time!" was the civil reply. Whether such might be the conduct of Edmund Campian should he marry, and his wife remind him of something similar, we cannot even guess; but, at all events, should Florence Stanhope be his wife, he verified at the commencement of our acquaintance with him the doctor's remark: he fancied there was something very singular in the interest which had been excited by the fair heretic; in the perturbed and gloomy state of her feelings during the rest of the day on which he had first seen her; and finally, if it was not extraordinary that she should have taken ill, it was most decidedly so, that he should have been sent for. But the whole was the simple process of nature and accidental situation. The elegant female strangers had naturally attracted his notice; his creed made him regret there heresy, and his rigid adherence to form, preventing the ordinary gratification of curiosity, and he imagined that there must be something more than usual in his desire to see the face of the young lady who had raised his holy pity. Dissatisfied with himself for allowing his mind for an instant to wander

from his religious duties, he looked back with self-condemnation to the ill-spent hour and half, and it was extremely natural that the image of the person who had caused this defalcation, should mingle itself with his thoughts. It is probable that in the case of another he would have taken this very view of the matter, but man's self-idolatry is such, that even the most wise will sometimes fancy that nature herself is diverted out of her ordinary course on his account. Perhaps he would have been persuaded that there was less of Providence in this affair, had he known that a servant, fresh from the country, had every morning, in passing for bread, read on a large brass plate, "Dr Campian," and had mechanically repeated the same, with the addition, "it is well, happen what will, that I know where to find a doctor." But to Edmund's warm imagination, all was the effect of that imperious fate which attends the blind deity.

He now felt himself under the influence of a self-imposed necessity, even before passion could have any sway over him, and he found his mind completely occupied by the images he had left. He pondered on the beauty which seemed merely ripened—scarcely impaired by

the lapse of forty years; "And yet," thought he, "hers is not a face which owes its smoothness to want of thought, for she reasons like a philosopher. Her daughter, no doubt, is of the same cast—but to me she can be nothing. I must however call at twelve o'clock, and see if she is better."

At that moment he was met by Thomas, who said, "My dear young master, you went off like a race horse, but you have returned like —"

"An ass."

"Dear sir, no. You are sure I cannot mean that; but you have staid very long, and your father never was so miserable. And now, dear sir, you must not contradict me this time. I pretended I had been to Steel's place, and that the lady was ugly and paralytic. You need not say yes, but don't, pray don't make a liar of me. I swore the last was sixty, and I would have made this one ten years older, but you know her maid said she was only forty, and what could I do? So I threw in palsy and a ghostish kind of look."

"It is in vain, Thomas, to urge the matter. Am I to go and confess that I have winked at your falsehoods, lest *you* should offend an earthly master?"

“I am sure,” said Thomas, “it is a true saying, that what we do for old people and children, are cast-away deeds; at least I shall think so, if you expose me in this affair.”

“To be accessory to the lies of another is a double crime, and no gratitude or false delicacy shall induce me even to prevaricate; and I beg that you will never attempt to serve me at such a price.”

“Well then, I am ruined,” said Thomas, resolutely holding the handle of the parlour door; “I’m ruined, that’s all; you will have that to answer for. I have been a servant for thirty years, and am not worth sixpence.”

“Thomas,” said Edmund, half laughing, “that is probably a lie too. You want to make out a swinging account when you are at it; but if you confess, merely to sin again, what better are you than those heretics who hold a compact with the devil, and their own locked-up bosoms? Go—” and he opened the door in spite of all resistance; but when he entered, he found his father fast asleep, and felt like one who is reprieved, while Thomas on tiptoe, and a raised finger in token of caution, whispered, “I am a great deal better than the rascals you speak of; they have no

shame, no compunction, and go on without even a sign of repentance, without even—”

“Hush! my father stirs.”

“Well, then, say you will not make a liar of me; it is for your sake that I am always sinning.”

Edmund removed his arm from the grasp of Thomas, and shut himself into a small adjoining room. There he ruminated on the hardship of injuring a faithful servant who had sinned from the double motive, (though in his haste he had stated only one,) of saving his old master from irritation, and his younger one from restraint. He considered too, that all chance of visiting the ladies would be cut off; and what would they think of one who could be so unkind and ill bred? It would even be a stain on his religion, for they would naturally imagine that a Protestant would not have served them in such a manner. “It matters not,” thought he, “I shall run all risks on my own account, and no one has a right to force me into a partnership in sin; nor can I be justified in being his shield. But my father may be injured; I may even occasion his death! But I am not in God’s stead; and do I not rather seek my own safety than my father’s?”

“Edmund!” was just then uttered in a loud peevish voice. The youth appeared, “What is the matter, Edmund? You look uneasy—your cheek is flushed—your eye seeks the ground—Anything wrong?”

“Nothing, sir.”

“Then why don’t you look me in the face? And why that tremor as if you were a boy?”

“I feared making you uneasy.”

“Uneasy! what about, sir? Uneasy! that betokens a cause—sit down, and tell me *all* about your visit.”

“All,” thought the youth; must I dilate upon the beauty and elegance of the mother, and the interest excited by the daughter, when I had scarcely seen her?”

“Yes, yes; I see how it is—something wrong. What are you considering about? The widow had a daughter. I told Thomas so; ay, ay, I see how it is; you will be the death of me; well may I exclaim, ‘I am weary of my life for the daughters of Heth.’”

He had worked himself up to the pitch which never failed to produce a fit, when Thomas, wringing his hands, asked in a whisper, “if this was not worse than an innocent peace-keeping lie.”

As soon as Edmund had restored his father, he hastened to arrest his attention, which was the most certain mode of preventing a relapse, and narrated all that had any reference to his visit in a professional capacity; but even *his* tender conscience absolved him from entering into any particulars on the score of beauty, or having seen the ladies before. Dr Campian looked at Thomas, who declared that he never saw the young lady at all; and that as to the other, he never saw a more miserable looking creature; but added, that his sight was no doubt greatly impaired. His master rarely thought him much to blame, and simply notified to his son that he would himself go to Steel's place tomorrow; and added, "I desire that you will not on any account go back. Do you hear?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Then, why do you not promise at once?"

"Because necessity may impel me."

"What necessity?"

"She may be taken violently ill, and you may be indisposed."

"She! Who is she? Are there not two of them?"

"Yes, but I was thinking of the invalid."

“O, you were ! Well then, sir, I desire you *not* to go. If she is taken ill, there are more medical people in —— than we.”

“Very well, sir,” said Edmund with a sigh.

“O ho ! you sigh ; your visit has been effective.”

“My dear father, I sigh because you are uneasy. Why should you apprehend anything from those or any other heretics ? You know my sworn promise. You know that I should think it sacrilege to the memory of him whose name I bear. No, my dear father, never ; I shall never be a traitor to my father, my illustrious kinsmen, and to our holy faith. Do support in yourself a little more confidence in a son who would sacrifice his life to your peace.”

“My dear Edmund, it is because I love you well that I would guard you with a care which to the world at large must seem superfluous, and to any son but you, unpardonable. But I know that you forgive my weakness, and indeed it is unworthy of such a son. I shall never yield to it again. Think no more of it ; I shall not. Go and visit our other patients ; and as it is a professional duty, I shall enquire after Miss Stanhope.”

Edmund was happy to see his father so soon restored to tranquillity; breakfasted, and set out upon his visits. But his father's peace of mind was short-lived; the demon of anxiety had seized upon his faculties; and even more than his usual misgivings,—and those were always more than enough,—haunted his imagination. He again retraced the time of Edmund's absence on his morning visit; allotted eight minutes to his walk, five to preliminaries, five to the feeling of his patient's pulse; nay, he would generously and considerately allow five more to all the little nothings which medical men must amuse their employers with, especially ladies; but more upon such an occasion was out of the question. A summons at four o'clock, a. m.;—a visit by candle-light in a bed-room—precluded from perambulating about the apartment, lifting up one thing, setting down another, remarking on this, and admiring that—on such an occasion, it was hardly possible to be too brief. “Where was I at?” thought he. “Ay, five minutes for saying nothings and sauntering about—quite enough—and I'll allow ten, it is a large allowance, for prescribing and even seeing the medicine swallowed, and ten more for walking deliberately up. That is altogether

about forty minutes. Now he was absent two hours. But he said he took a long walk by the river side. I have only his word for that. Shame upon me !—doubt his word !”

He now turned his thoughts to the visit which he was himself to pay, and certainly no lover was ever more impatient for the hour of assignation. But it was not the heart-bounding, cheek-flushing, eye-sparkling of love, which, while time appears long, gives to it a character which no other portion of man's existence possesses. Two tedious hours were marked only by irritation, and not unfrequently, like Muckle-wrath, he was on the point of sending forward the pointer of his time-piece. Eleven o'clock at last approached, and he was just about to sally forth, when he recollected that his son had acknowledged the widow was beautiful. He consulted his glass, and discovered that his thin grey locks were uncombed, his beard of two day's growth, and his linen somewhat past its best in every respect. To face thus a beauty, and especially a beauty of forty, was out of the question. Thomas was summoned from the next room, when after an hour's labour,—for his master could not be hurried,—he surveyed the work of his hands with as much satis-

faction as if to him Dr Campian was indebted for the remains of a handsome face and fine form.

Steel's place was at last gained, and Thomas ordered to sit in the lobby until his master's visit was made. On entering a handsome parlour, to await the appearance of Mrs Stanhope, he felt his tremor and anxiety increase, but fortunately a variety of objects attracted his notice, and drove his thoughts into new channels, so that his nerves became a little more firm. He had just finished a hasty inspection of some fine china jars, filled with various perfumes, which were placed upon and beneath a white marble slab, when Mrs Stanhope entered. The senior Dr Campian was remarkable for the elegance of his bow; indeed, it was said that not a man in the town of M—— could equal him in that, or the general grace of his manners, though somewhat formal for days in which ease is fast degenerating into rudeness. Few people were more alive to genuine exterior grace than Mrs Stanhope, or to the sort of interest which Dr Campian's whole appearance was calculated to excite, and she half started on seeing the tall thin figure, the white locks, and sharp features of the person before her; but her

hand was instinctively held out as he recovered from his salutation, and stood erect, with his best professional manner, which, less or more formal according to the rank of his employer, never, even in his most agitated moments entirely forsook him.

But, although habit compelled manners, it could not withdraw his absorbed attention from the beautiful object before him, as forgetting to quit her hand, he gazed upon her swimming blue eyes, her light hair first parted into braids, and these covered with a profusion of curls, and a mouth of singular sweetness, just opening into a smile as she began to wonder at his silence and steady observation; or perhaps the rivetted attention could not but force upon her recollection a thousand instances of the same devoted notice on a first sight of her.

“And is this,” thought he, “the person with whom my son last night spent so immeasurable a time?” He dropped her hand, and laid his upon the marble slab, the sudden application to which probably saved him from a nervous attack. As her notice had been equally arrested, she quickly perceived that there was a tendency to indisposition of some sort, and handing him a seat, she brought him, in an instant, a cordial,

which happening to be what he liked best, and what generally relieved him, gave a sudden turn to his feelings. Nothing so rapidly works a change upon a man as a successful appeal to his palate, and perhaps with no man so much as with one who is in the habit of excessive self-denial.

“I beg your pardon,” said he, “but indeed I should cease to give attendance, for I am not so strong as I have been, and this is the most oppressive weather I recollect ever to have seen in the end of September, or rather beginning of October. I have called to enquire for Miss Stanhope, and on my being announced, you might expect to see the same Dr Campian who waited upon you last night.”

Mrs Stanhope had not thought upon the subject, but was too polite to say so, and immediately expressed her regret for having disturbed him on the previous evening; “and yet,” said she, “I can scarcely regret what has afforded me the pleasure of ——” She paused, for she could not well add—of “seeing you,” as there could not, to him, appear any particular cause of pleasure in that circumstance. However, he construed the half finished sentence into a compliment of some sort, and

acknowledged it by a slight inclination of the head. "My daughter is quite recovered," said she, "and I believe, as your son told me, nature would have resumed her rights without medical aid, but indeed she was very ill when I sent, and the mother of an only child is easily alarmed."

The doctor sighed, and shaded his grey eyebrows and dark eyes with his hand; and then after a mutual pause, he said, "My son was not much alarmed then?"

"Not in the least. Ignorance, you know, is easily worked upon by fear."

"True; but it is more safe in all diseases to follow the dictates of fear, in so far as to seek medical aid in time, than to wait until it is too late, from a dread of ridicule for having sought it too soon. I have known a life lost in that way."

"You are very polite," said the lady, "to find an excuse for my unnecessary alarm."

"I don't however agree with my son in this case; a violent paroxysm of sickness is never without cause of alarm; for unless we very precisely know that it originates in a very simple cause, it is impossible to guess at the lurking mischief. I have seen the mere throes of sick-

ness enough of themselves to bring on convulsions and death. It was not like his usual sense. Surely he was infatuated."

Here he paused, and again surveyed the lady. She, being a stranger, and almost a solitary one, felt pleased with having so ready an excuse for her fears; and, seeming to receive a warrant for not being over scrupulous again, was about to say something at once polite and grateful, when he added, "And while I advise, in any such case, prompt application to a physician, I will recommend one who lives exactly opposite to this little square. I take the liberty, as your sending for me shows you are a stranger, and you may rely on the skill and attention of Dr Burton."

Mrs Stanhope felt as if she had received a smart blow, and taking out a long green silk purse, she drew forth two guineas, and presented them to the old gentleman.

"You must excuse me," said he proudly; "I am under a —— I mean, I don't take money to-day. I have particular reasons—believe me—I intend no sort of unkindness; but the truth is, my son's attendance and mine are occupied beyond measure by the poor people of the sister island, who are engaged in this populous manufacturing town, and its environs, and we

cannot, indeed we cannot, spare time for any other *opulent* people than those who —— who have been long under our care, and have peculiar claims upon us.”

Mrs Stanhope laid the money on the marble slab, and sat silent. The doctor’s heart relented. “I have,” thought he, “wounded the feelings of a beautiful and elegant woman: it is true, she is a heretic; but was not Peter sent to all? Ours is an inviting not an excluding religion; and who knows? But no—my son—I must run no risks;” and rising, he took her hand, and said, “You know not, madam, the many reasons ——”

He stopped; she felt inclined to make a proud reply; but meeting his softened eyes, and remarking the general appearance of trepidation and feebleness which he exhibited, she smiled with that bitter melancholy expression, which far more than tears bespeaks a torn heart, and said, “I shall always regret that, having seen you, I am not to number you amongst my few friends.”

He reseated himself, and taking up the small glass which had contained the cordial, put it to his lips, as if in the remaining drops he expected to find strength. Mrs Stanhope took

the glass from his hand, and filling it, said, "Oblige me by swallowing a little more; you are overcome, and require support."

"I should not," said he, "indulge myself to-day, for I have often, often erred, since it commenced; but to prevent a greater evil it may be excusable."

At that moment Florence entered, and he hastily swallowed the cordial, as if her presence required an accession of strength. He was a man of the most delicate tact; perhaps it was that very delicacy which so continually led him into what he deemed error. He felt that he had given pain; he saw that the elder lady was some way or other unfortunate, and had she been in a wretched garret, instead of an apartment which in elegance might have vied with those of the fancy-filling rooms of the Arabian Tales, he must have been satisfied that she belonged to the very best society. All this had operated on his taste and good nature, and he had rallied himself to say something of an atoning kind, when the young lady entered the room. She was so precise a counterpart of her mother, that he needed no more, to see all the danger that lay before him. In one instant his son's doom seemed fixed, and his

eternal weal perilled. His kindness and compunction fled; he conceived that severity would be true kindness, and that he had better inflict a slight wound at present than a deeper one afterwards: therefore, with a profound bow to both ladies, he withdrew without venturing another look or word.

Mrs Stanhope sat silent for some time, while her daughter was engaged in copying a drawing of the celebrated Portland vase; but throwing aside her pencil, she exclaimed, "I don't care for this. Do you think the sexton of the Catholic chapel will permit me to take a copy of the Virgin Mary, which is on the right of the south window?"

"Dear Florence," said her mother, "I should think you may find many subjects of equal interest."

"None, except the Son of Mary, and that is too sublime a subject for me to attempt."

"I fear you must find a picture of her elsewhere, if you are resolved on trying it, for I am certain, were it possible to find the sexton, which it is not, that he would deem the request a most unhallowed one, at least in a heretic. But were we free to enter that place for such a purpose, I confess that I should feel decidedly

averse to doing so. I must own I was highly pleased, at least highly excited, and in some measure overpowered; but, like all excitation which has not its source in reason, it was succeeded, and that very speedily, by an apathetic vacuity. Besides, to tell you the plain truth, I am a little mortified, and certainly disappointed, by an occurrence, of which, were I not predisposed by painful circumstances, I should not think for a moment, but as it is, I am jealous of every look and word. I was struck with the uncommon appearance of the old physician who came to enquire for you; his graceful figure, his milk-white locks, his dark hazel eyes, which at first seemed to fluctuate amidst a variety of expression, and — you know my devotion to elegance—his bow. You smile; but really, Florence, we are all—aye, men of stern judgments are, caught by just such trifles. Indeed, I am not sure that they should be deemed trifles; for unless where there is consummate art, it is of the air and manner, far more than of the features, by which we may judge. Features are born with us; and, notwithstanding all that has been said on the subject, it is still very doubtful, considering the many accidents to which they are liable, whether they are indicative of cha-

racter or not; but our air and manner *may* be a true index to the mind."

"Why do you lay an emphasis on *may*?"

"Because air and manner are often the offspring of hypocrisy; but we are bound to believe that right which appears to be so. 'Charity thinketh no evil;' and it is only a base corrupt mind which seeks to go beyond the superficies of a fellow-creature, when these give a good promise."

"But you cannot augur much from a mere bow, which is taught by the dancing-master; and I should think that all the pupils of the same man will bow very much in the same manner."

"I did not mean to say that I would form a judgment of a man from his bow, but merely that you might be conciliated by it. However, you are mistaken in thinking that all the pupils of the same teacher will bow in the same manner. Had the timid Cowper, the moral Johnson, the cynical Swift, all been taught by the same man, and all been well flogged in order to produce his indiscriminating effect, they would each have bent the head differently; and I now see that there actually is more in a bow than I had before imagined. But setting Dr Campian's bland bow aside, it is impossible to survey his

exterior for one instant without being impressed in his favour, and with a sympathetic feeling towards him on account of an appearance of extreme sensibility, which I should imagine, rather than age, has enfeebled his frame, and given a tremor to his manner."

"Then why did you and he part so abruptly? He did not even enquire after his patient, at least not of herself."

"He recommended another physician just at the moment when I was congratulating myself on having met with one whose age would render him a safe friend, and whose manners gave me reason to expect that he would be a pleasant one. What did he say? that he had reasons for not visiting us! Good heaven! reasons! Dear Florence, am I to be for ever forced to pay the price of appearances over which I have no control?"

"But I thought you said the physician was a young man."

"Yes, it was his son who came in the morning: and that is very true—Why did not he, instead of his feeble father, inquire for you? He has heard—but the thing is too absurd to be repeated even as a calumny—that your mother may not be looked on with impunity. O! how many shapes will not jealousy take, when bent

on the destruction of its victim! Well, be it so;" and rising proudly, she looked at herself in a Venetian mirror, and then laughed with bitter irony. "And is there," continued she, "aught so very seductive in that pale face, light locks, and blue eyes? O! it was my manner! I looked, they said, a voluptuary. My manner! Heaven knows I would not walk across this room to command the admiration of all the men that ever existed. Excepting one, I never held them so high, and indeed I know little of them. O! but it is my conversation. I never speak like an ordinary person. Is it not astonishing, that they will even flatter me in order to make out their charges? And if only villains or fools believed the insinuations of their own sort, it were well; but even the good and wise have too keen an appetite for scandal. It seems to be the natural food of all, and that none shut their ears against it, or begin to suspect its fatal poison, until they themselves have sickened under its baneful influence. I thought I had conquered all this, and that, emulous of our own great poet, I scorned to feel the world's injustice: but I was mistaken; I thought so only when at rest, and perhaps he thought so only when irritated. No; it is not in humanity—we

must feel scorn, and the less we deserve it, we feel it the more. The fine old man! I said to myself; here I may indulge the kindness of my heart; but I find it must be shut up to all but yourself. My sweet Florence, your very name has danger in it: they will say it is the same addressed by the proud poet, or will they swear that mine is Florence? Anything to glut suspicion."

She again paced the room, stirred up the perfumes in different jars, sprinkled the apartment with lavender, and then sitting down to her netting said, "Florence, I am not ashamed of this weakness. I have been touched—I have been breathed upon by calumny. Where is the woman who, with one shade of right principle, will not be driven to the verge of madness by having a finger pointed at her?"

"My dear mother," said Florence, "you told me yesterday that you had conquered those feelings. Did you not say, that to be unjustly aspersed is as much a trial from God as any other species of affliction? And did you not agree with me in thinking that it would be delightful to sink into the repose of piety!"

Mrs Stanhope smiled ironically; and after considering a little, said, "I was somewhat en-

thusiastic yesterday. I had just been where thousands circumstanced like me have found a blessed and a holy repose. But I cannot be the dupe of enthusiasm. It is only reason, cool reason, that can conquer the cruel perturbations to which I am yet liable. Yes, that is it—you have recalled the true consolation, or at least the true cause for implicit, bowed-down resignation. What though I suffer from the villany of men? What though I say to myself, this comes not from the hand of God? Still it belongs to the cup of fate which has been destined to me, and therefore I should swallow to the last drop, if it is doomed. Florence, never forget that we are here to endure.”

“ Why then, my dear mother, when you reason so well, do you still yield at times to these cruel bursts of anguish?”

“ Why? O that you may never know why! Is not this strange? Were you beset, as I have been, by calumniators,—were your heart torn, as mine has been, by the barbed arrows of malice and misconstruction, I should feel it all. Yet you do not seem to *comprehend* my sufferings, though I am sure you love me. Alas! alas! it is, that no child ever loved like a parent. Had that finger been pointed at you, Florence!

Yet even that must have been borne. Heavens! what the human mind is fitted to bear—fitted—obliged—aye, that is it—the all-powerful *must* comprehend in its all the pride of philosophy, and perhaps all the pretence of——But I am better now. You know, Florence, how I cling to the endearments of social life; you know how my soul pants for the reciprocity of sentiment, and you know how I am cut off from all that. Still hope never quits us, and I am too apt, when I meet with a beaming, intelligent eye, to feel that here is a kindred, social mind. But, Florence, so deeply have I suffered, that I shun young men as I would plague or pestilence, not because I ever received an approximation to insult from any one, but because all my intercourse with them has subjected me to slander. Therefore, although I found in the young physician a countenance which spoke volumes, and a sensibility”——Here both smiled——“Yes, I will say it——what is in the word?——a sensibility which gives the last touch to intelligence, yet I hoped that I should not see him again. But when I saw in his father a person in whom the attractions of the son were rendered safe and venerable by age, I rejoiced to think that I had found at once a physician and a friend. Scarcely how-

ever had my heart bounded and my eyes sparkled, than, with my usual fate, I found that where there was safety there was also a repulsion. Good heaven! Surely not; and what could he hear? Nothing. So say I, but what says Fame? ‘You know not all my reasons.’ It is true, he assigned professional reasons, but still those last words haunt my ear.”

Here Mrs Stanhope became silent, while her daughter’s eyes were fixed upon her with that intensity which at once bespeaks solicitude, conjecture, and affection.

“I cannot comprehend it,” said she: “we have not been here a month, and as you truly say, there is nothing to hear. My dear mother, it is your own delicacy that distracts you; and it is because I am incapable of seeing a true cause of alarm in these little—excuse me, I think them little—occurrences, which have raised your fears, that you imagine me insensible to your distress. And if you will think for a moment, you will see, that as the manner and a few expressions of this old man are alarming merely because you don’t understand them, so it may be in a thousand cases in which your extreme delicacy has taken the alarm. But rather than suffer from this new cause, I would write a

note, and say explicitly, that being a stranger and easily alarmed on——”

“What?”

“The score of character.”

“Character! that is to sound an alarm against myself.”

“Well, then, that being a stranger and of a peculiarly sensitive and delicate turn of mind, that you could not feel easy until you knew if his unexplained reasons had any connexion with yourself.”

Mrs Stanhope took up a sheet of paper, began, and then threw it aside. “No,” said she, “it is time that I should cease to worship at the shrine of pure fame. Whoever in reality enjoyed it, amongst those whose faculties placed them above the mere animal creation? Look at that book, run your eyes down a few of its pages, and you will see the characters which one set of men have worshipped, blasted by another set as creatures whom no pen can sufficiently blacken! History itself set at defiance; kings, queens, counsellors, church dignitaries, all sunk into the foul pit of just or unjust calumny, and judgment left in a maze of puzzled scepticism.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE senior Dr Campian had been broken down by irritability of temper, which producing such thoughts and little acts as in his tender conscience rendered him liable to fasts and other penances, gave him at the age of sixty the appearance of being at least fifteen years older, and that in a class which cannot be said to enjoy a green old age. To sin, to repent, and to sin again, was the life of Dr Campian. But what were his crimes? Such as most men commit daily without even the punishment of a momentary reproach. But Dr Campian had been brought up in a school of strict discipline; in a school which taught him that for every fault, however trivial, he was amenable to his conscience, and that it was requisite that his body should suffer for the faults of his mind. Nor did he, after having so punished himself, presume to think that there was any merit in his own

deeds, any more than does he who pays a just debt, the non-payment of which would drag him to jail; and no logic whatever could have convinced the good old man, that *another* coming forward in his stead could possibly exonerate him from responsibility. In the perpetual habit of scanning all his actions, and of balancing accounts between his conscience and its claims upon his self-command and endurance, he looked back on the state of his mind since four o'clock in the morning. There he found an anxiety, a mortal anxiety, which seemed to assign to himself somewhat of the divine care;—there he found suspicion of a son, in whom even his querulous nature could find no just cause of censure;—there he found a most foul and uncharitable disposition towards the most beautiful creature he had ever beheld. “I will return,” said he, while he staid the step of his prop Thomas, “I will return, crave her pardon, and offer my services, and that friendship which I could read in her lovely blue eyes was essential to her happiness. Alas! she is a stranger, perhaps friendless, *perhaps persecuted!* Yes, I will back and do my best to comfort her.” He turned down half a street; his compunction became less severe, his compassion less tender; and he ex-

claimed almost audibly, "What am I about? Am I, at the age of threescore, to be lured by a pair of soft eyes, an expansive brow, a fascinating smile, and a dangerous softness of air? And what is this fair decoy? this mother of as fair a counterpart! Monstrous! and have my feet turned on the path which carried me from her? Weak old man! and thou wouldst stamp and rave at the young blood of thy son! But it is a sense of violated politeness, outraged humanity, that pointed my feet back. So says the Tempter. Have we not vowed, that he who deserves the name of Campian shall never be more than a merciful stranger to a heretic? and would I risk my son?"

With such fluctuating thoughts, but still keeping the balance in favour of a retreat from temptation, he regained his home. It was not, however, until he had fairly faced a full-length painting of his unfortunate and, at least *to him*, illustrious kinsman, which represented him pinioned and placarded with "Here goes the Jesuit Campian!" that his zeal was a perfect and thorough equipoise to his more tender and humane feelings. He wiped his forehead, crossed his arms, and turning from the poor persecuted Catholic, knelt before a crucifix and burst into

tears. Thomas had merely not entered the room, and was in fact both within sight and hearing, which owing to his master's infirmity was always the case with either himself or Edmund, and stepping in as soon as the burst of feeling had subsided, he pretended to put some things in order preparatory to dinner. "Well, Thomas," said he, "I am here and safe; but in truth, my good Thomas, there must have been some strange spell—one would almost think a demoniac miracle—for in this world you will scarcely meet with such a pair of absolute beauties, both in face and form. How you could be so blinded and deceived is past my comprehension."

"There is no accounting for taste, sir. I remember when I was a little foot-boy, that a mistress of mine said to an out-door servant—for she was of a familiar turn—'John,' said she, 'did you ever see such a beauty as the duchess? You would get a good look of her yesterday in church.'—'Five score,' said John, 'filling dung-carts.' Now this shews plainly, that not only what is one man's meat is another man's poison, but that what ravishes one eye is often ugly to another."

“No, Thomas, that is not proved by your story; for John merely alleged that he had seen five hundred as good, but by no means abstracting anything from the duchess.”

“It surprises me to hear you say so, who are so nice; there is not a doubt that if John could fancy dirty begrimed women as beautiful as the duchess of B——;—I remember her well—she was a fat, comely woman, fair red and white, some said none of her own;—but if he could fancy those dirty creatures even half as pretty as the duchess, it is no wonder if the white tallow-looking things I saw last night seemed downright ugly to me. I am of a ghostish, timid temper, and pale women by candlelight are always a disagreeable sight to me: even by daylight when they passed me in the lobby I was scared.”

“Yes, they *are* pale; but yet there is a slight tinge of red, just like the palest pink rose—I don’t like your robust carnation beauties—I like a face and form that indicate an active soul. I remember the duchess you speak of, at least I have so often heard you allude to your provincial one (for every man has his idol, a model, a pattern which everything must resemble or be

despised) that I have no doubt it is the same you mean; she became a widow, and married a young handsome English rake of quality."

"Yes, the same."

"Well, John was right; you may find a buxom thoughtless lass anywhere. But, Thomas—sit down, Thomas. Do you know, that when I am very much fatigued myself, I cannot bear to see any one stand. It is not according to form; but nobody sees, and you are neither much younger nor much stronger than myself. I say, Thomas, I like a temple in which you can trace every vein—an eye in which you can read ten thousand various emotions following each other in rapid succession, yet each making an impression—a mouth which seems this moment to dissolve into smiles, and the next to betray tokens of quick and trembling sensibility—a bust which seems to have come from the hands of an ancient Greek, and limbs in which there is so much grace that you almost forget they are human. Such, Thomas, are the dangerous persons I have left. I must this day do penance for the treachery of my heart—it reproached me, Thomas, for having acted right—aye, and it was not until I had fronted Edmund Campian that I was satisfied. Yes, beauty is a sad snare: even

when we are in one respect dead to it, still it finds its way to the heart."

"I am sure such beauties would be no snare to me. I know nothing about the things you have been describing; but this I know, that I would not give one glance of the duchess of B.'s black eyes for all the features put together of these ladies—they are mere spectres in my eyes."

"Hush! hush! Thomas, there is Edmund. Let us not stir up the embers of recollection. He staid long, that is certain. Should I exact farther promise?"

"No, no; if master Edmund promised once, it is ten thousand times strong."

Thomas withdrew; Edmund placed himself by the side of his father; both were silent, and neither raised an eye. The heart of the younger fluttered to hear of his patient; so did that of the elder, because he guessed at the thoughts of his son. At last he said, "Do you dine to-day, Edmund?"

"Yes, father; and I trust you have no reason to abstain; indeed I am sure you have none."

"How can you be sure of any such thing? I like not such security. It savours too much of reformation strength; and yet they profess to

have no strength in themselves, and say that we find ours in that which is our weakness. I sometimes think, Edmund, that your zeal is slackened; that you have mixed too much, when at college, with the heretical world. Alas! my boy, can you ever cease to abhor, to dread those tenets, which led unto the death that valiant champion of our holy church?"

"You do me wrong, my dear father. But your frame is not fit for the dreadful exactions you make upon it: Mr D'Alembert has himself told you so, and instead of urging you to penance, has conjured you to abstain from it. Indeed, indeed, your conscience is by much too tender."

"Foolish, silly boy! You are, I fear, fast upon the decline. What though my frame is exhausted, is worn out, if it is in duty, and by holy mortification? Does it signify that the tenement of clay fails, if the tenant is safe?"

"Suppose, father, I were as delicate as the poor young man next door, whose existence seems to hang on aliment, would you not say, 'O Edmund, for the love of my grey hairs, spare yourself.'"

"Doubtless I would. You have a double, a threefold duty to perform—that to your God, to your parent, and to your poor patients, some

of whom could ill spare you. But as for me, my lamp is so nearly out, that it matters not whether oil is supplied or withheld. It is to the essence which depends not on food, that I look; and every hour that I advance in the evening of life, it becomes more important that I do so with vigilance. It is only eight days since Ember week, and have you already forgotten the lively exhortation of Mr D'Alembert on the preceding Sunday? Did he not say, 'We fast less now than at first, not because we need it less, but because of the increasing hardness of our hearts; and we are aware, that in punishing to the utmost of your deserts, we should find you like the children of Jeshurun.'

"Yes; but he also said, that allowance would be made for weak constitutions and for children. And, father, how often have you told me, that we two are all the world to each other. You are comparatively young, and with care—with, if I may so speak, an abstinence from abstinence, you may live for twenty years. Think of this for my sake; and as it is said of delicate children, you are more dear to me because of the very care which you require."

The old man grasped his son's hand, pressed it to his heart, then to his lips, and seemed

again ready to weep. Both gentlemen had now found the point of precise union: jealousy was banished from the breast of the father; and if a lingering thought remained in that of the son, respecting the fair strangers, it was now more than counterbalanced by grief for having caused one moment's even involuntary pain to his beloved parent.

Had Mrs Stanhope been able to read the heart of Edmund Campian, she would have been staggered in her theory, that the child never feels for the parent as the parent does and has done for the child. Most assuredly this opinion is as correct as it is prevalent; but there are exceptions to all rules, and the attachment between Edmund and his father was as equal as any that ever existed between father and child.

Everything had tended to render their hearts one. The wife of Dr Campian had died when his son was an infant; and as a father is generally attached to his children in proportion to his love for his wife, his for her having been of the most devoted sort, it now devolved on Edmund with a double fervour. He became his father's charge in an extraordinary degree, for he considered that he had the common duties of both parents to fulfil, and that in the midst of

a crooked, perverse, and, to him, heretical generation, it was incumbent on him to watch every inlet to false opinion, as a guardian angel would over its delegated charge. At the age of eight, Dr Campian procured for his son an accomplished Jesuit, to whom the charge of his spiritual interests and general education were committed. The priest might be said to have educated young Campian, literally, for God and his father; and even when removed at unavoidable times from home, and put under other care, hovered about his charge, at once as a monitor and a guard.

Everybody knows the influence of persecution on the virtuous and firm-minded, and the murder of his kinsman in the reign of queen Elizabeth, with the degrading and aggravating circumstances by which it was attended, had produced on the senior Dr Campian, and those of the same name who had preceded him, a strong and eradicable hostility to the foes of their faith, in each of whom they fancied that another as highly gifted and as zealous as their great namesake would meet a murderer; nor did the events of late years tend to lessen that conviction. But the younger Campian was so gentle by nature, that notwithstanding the efforts of his father to stimulate his wrath on

this *one* point, the utmost pitch to which he could ever screw it up was a hatred of sin, and of cruelty in particular, against whatever party they might be exercised. Yet he could admire the devoted zeal of his father, as he dwelt upon the worth of Campian and the butchery of those who murdered him. When a child, his father every day held him up in his arms, to let him look at the picture of the Jesuit; would point to his melancholy features; narrate what he had done; tell of his accomplishments; and then, grinding his teeth, point at the label on his hat, which he invariably finished with, "Yes, my child, let me every day put you in mind how unsafe to yourself, how sacrilegious to our church, and to him, one of its best champions, ever to cherish an individual as a friend, who has sucked in the fearful notions which could send a man like that to a disgraceful death." Sometimes he would turn over a Protestant book, and say, "Look there; see the degrading pity of Protestants, and how they presume to bestow it on such a saint:—'*The poor wretch was led to his fate; and however much we may censure his mistaken zeal, we must hope that the story of racks and tortures is not true.*' Can mortal man read such words without stamping

his foot and clenching his fist?" His constitution was not then worn out, and this paroxysm generally ended with merely a few angry, rapid movements through his apartment. But in process of time his irritable habit increased, notwithstanding all his mortifications; and these mortifications so weakened his frame, that the fainting fits alluded to generally succeeded to any violent excitation. Scarcely a day passed, perhaps never, in which Dr Campian did not remind his son of the claim which this kinsman's memory had upon him; and if ever Edmund felt inclined to be impatient, it was in being warned against a set of people with whom he had mixed very little, and to whom he felt no partiality.

All he could effect that day for his father's temporal benefit was, to divert and enliven his mind by presenting to it various subjects of thought; and in order to avoid all heretical reminiscences, he launched widely and deeply into medical detail, rendering every case under his care as interesting as possible, and giving to some of the characters of his patients as much graphical touching as was well consistent with truth.

The elder Campian could not banish from his

recollection and regrets the fair objects of his admiration, but they ceased to call up his fears and compunctions. Not so his son. While they forced themselves upon his thoughts, it was with self-condemnation; and in spite of all his efforts to the contrary, he still, as on the first evening of the same week, saw as a vision the daughter flitting before him, and with her was now incorporated the idea of her beautiful and intelligent mother, giving as it were reality to what had seemed before scarcely tangible.

Though he repelled with all his might these fair intruders on his thoughts, still, as Sunday approached, he would sit with his eyes fixed on vacancy, hardly aware of what occupied his mind, until, by a wonder if his chapel would be again their resort, and that conjecture accompanied by a repressed sigh, he was aware, or rather he began to fear, that the first impression, strengthened as it had been by curiosity, and that followed up by regret, was not so evanescent as his duty required. But how was it possible that juvenile politeness, yet unsoured and fortified by the rubs of life, could surmount without a blush his own apparent neglect, and his father's evident abandonment—(he did not know how palliated, or if at all)—of anything

human?—but of two such? There was deep blushing shame in the thought; and circumstanced as he was, even the flushed cheek had sin in it.

Not less agitated and abstracted had been the thoughts of Florence Stanhope; but her uneasiness and abstraction sprung from very different causes. So much, indeed, had her mind been occupied by the new train of thinking which had taken possession of it, that to this was owing her less than ordinary sympathy with her mother. The young lady was at that age when the mind of an intelligent female begins to feel the inanity of ordinary life. A pause has just taken place from the claims of involuntary education, and when ceasing to be taught, she begins to learn. Of course we allude to such as have in them the faculty of thinking; to such, who, instead of finding a resource from the ennui incident to humanity, in gauze, ribbons, and idle amusements, seek it in the cultivation of the mind. But one feeling is common both to those who seem to acknowledge a divine responsibility, and to the poor deluded things who seem by their whole conduct to deny that they are accountable beings, or that they have in them any rational, solid hope of that which

they all profess to believe,—a life hereafter. I say, one *feeling* is common to the unthinking creature who seems to be placed in the maniac's circular swing, and to her who would willingly keep out of it,—that is, of a wretched uneasiness—a mental vacuity—in short, a something which, while it is undefinable, admonishes, if the silent hint were attended to, that this is not our continuing city. The thoughtless quell this feeling, which is one of the most sad and painful attendant on humanity, by rushing into the arms of folly and of vice. The thoughtful and wise—what do they? The great mass seek the road to worldly prosperity; a few others, the path of science; and many others—wise too—the tumults and the disputations, the hopes and the fears of religion. Yes, it is to that dreadful sense of man's littleness—that sense of it which sends the panting soul into other regions—*that* sense of it, to which the contemplative have clung as the best assurance of man's immortality, that we owe the madness of ambition and the cruelties of religion. Few, very few, have winced more under these feelings than ourselves, and few have more frequently exclaimed, “ Surely this unfilled soul, this never-dying hope that our existence here is not our all, must originate in a

source which speaks to an immortal soul! Surely it is not that, in the progress of mind from the lowest to the highest mortal creature, man has merely arrived at a pitch which renders him at once more wretched and more vicious!" . . . Dreadful! That this may not be so, is a wish as ardent as was that of Mary Wolstoncraft, when she exclaimed, ' I dread nothing but annihilation.' Poor thing! mistaking and mistaken as thou wert, we feel assured that few minds ever had less cause to dread futurity.

It was in the first year's cessation from being directed in her pursuits by others, that Florence began to experience this painful yet in some measure hope-inspiring sense of this life's utter incapacity to fill and satisfy the mind of a reasonable creature. She was an Episcopalian, and had been accustomed to the Church of England service; but in a late visit to Scotland, she had gone to hear the orators of the metropolis. Perhaps it was, that her mother, being rather a cold christian, had neglected all those adventitious aids to devotion which stir up and fan the yet feeble heat, that hitherto not a single enthusiastic emotion had found a place in her breast. Custom, thus unassisted, had rendered the Episcopalian service a matter of mere

form; and in her occasional visits to Presbyterian places of worship in Scotland, she felt an unqualified dislike, alleging, that in the plainest and most simple there seemed to be a grudging of external respect to the Deity; or where something better had been attempted, it appeared to be rather the efforts of foppery, than of minds properly imbued with a sense of the more immediate presence of Divinity. She had gone forth on the last Sunday of September the 17th after Pentecost, dull and inert; she was discontented, she could not have told why; she sighed, but knew not for what. Still languid, her attention was roused by the attitude of a poor creature, a youth, probably Irish, who lay half prostrate opposite to the altar; another dipt his finger in token of being cleansed and purified, before he knelt, and made the sign of that in which *they* glory, but of which any external recognition seems a reproach to a Protestant. Nay, we recollect having seen a pretty girl quizzed, as it is termed, for wearing a cross! Strange, unholy perversion! Yes, unholy; for it cannot be otherwise than profane in a christian, even a mere nominal one, to scoff at the representation of that on which a *meek* and *virtuous* martyr died, supposing he had no higher claim on our love and respect than that of martyrdom. And we think it impossible

that even a deist, or if such a thing be, an atheist, can look on a fine representation of the crucified, dying Jesus, impressed, falsely or truly, with the notion that on him was at that dying moment laid all the sins of all mankind, without a sensation of awe; and who knows, but that awe may at last lead to conviction? There is something so touchingly sublime in the idea, something so much and so far beyond every other martyrdom—that of Socrates not excepted—that it is impossible to see the cornelian cross of a poor silly girl made a subject of wit and laughter, without deploring the levity of our own times.

But to return to our heroine: placed as she was at the moment with a singularly fine crucifix before her, and with every knee bent in solemn devotion around her, she could not but recollect having once heard an Episcopalian youth declare, “that he never could get beyond number seven in his *apparent* supplication, on entering an English church.” Here, however, hypocrisy must be deep, if the solemnity with which they cross, kneel, and at least *appear* to pray, is mere seeming; and she never thought of doubting the reality of what impressed her with a conviction that she had never seen true worship before. We have already narrated how

she was affected by the service while there; but whether her subsequent illness was occasioned by mere excitation or other causes, we cannot pretend to determine. Her mother was often called upon, in the course of the following week, to tell all she knew of Popery, while Florence listened, mused, and again sought for fresh information, often exclaiming, "Dear mother, can an enlightened people, in an enlightened age, believe the things you tell me and those asserted by the authors you read to me? Popery, even by your own admission, came almost fresh from the apostolic hands; how then could it be so corrupted a faith? It is more than wonderful that enlightened Rome should believe in miraculous powers being a kind of heritable property; in the possibility of mere man remitting sins; or in the horrible impiety of men being able to *purchase* pardon for the sins which he yet only contemplates the commission of!"

"You forget that Rome was not enlightened as to religion; you forget that she worshipped an almost innumerable number of deities, and that her greatest philosophers were glad to be enrolled amongst her priests, aye, her fortune-tellers."

"True; and when we read of that circum-

stance, particularly in regard to Cicero, you said that such men must have acted in compliance with popular prejudice, and for political ends; because, as you remarked, it was quite impossible that they could believe in anything so absurd as that God would unfold his future purposes by the flight of birds, or the quivering of a bullock's heart. Therefore they were enlightened, but impostors; and as a new imposition was not only opposed to, but must have been hostile to, their supposed interests, I cannot comprehend how such novel absurdities could have been admitted."

"It is surprising certainly, but it is true."

"Mother, there must be some mistake. Would God abandon his *own* religion to cunning, crafty priests, before it was yet known to those whom it came to redeem? Have you not told me a hundred times to take warning from your own fate, and learn charity? It was but last week you said, 'When a man or woman is put down, everything, however trivial, tells against the individual—it is listened to and exaggerated for the purposes of malignity.' Now it may be the same thing as to Popery; it is put down in this country, its good properties—and surely it must have had some—are all

forgotten, and its faults—it is dreadful to hear them—expatiated upon as I have heard them by my uncle.”

“ Yes, Florence, think of that and beware. You know your uncle’s inveteracy on that subject; and were he to hear that you have been wishing to extenuate their errors, my evils will be deepened a thousand-fold by what you must suffer. I took you once to see and hear the forms of the ancient church; I could not do less, whetted as your curiosity was by all that you had heard; but stop there.”

“ Don’t you recollect,” said Florence, “ how heartily you all laughed, six or seven years ago, when, after my uncle had been stamping and raving lest they should ever enjoy any more advantages than they have at present, I asked, ‘ *Of what they had been guilty?*’ I asked then in compassion; but, on Sunday, I put the same question in justice; and I again say solemnly, ‘ *Of what have they been guilty?*’ ”

“ They were guilty of keeping people in ignorance, and often of most cruel and dreadful persecutions.”

“ I don’t know about the truth of the first charge, and I have two very strong reasons for doubting it; one is, that you have frankly con-

fessed the ignorance of Protestants upon the subject; and the other, that I heard with my own ears, on Sunday last, what gives a complete negative to the assertion. Did not Mr D'Alembert say, again and again, 'Has not your Bible told you of God's abhorrence of sin?' Would he refer them to what they knew nothing of? Did he not, in proving the necessity of casting sin from us, through the figure, as he well explained, of an eye or a hand, lead back his hearers to the very first crime? I shall never, while I live, forget the sublime energy with which he clasped his hands and exclaimed, 'If God could so visit, not on the perpetrators only, but on countless generations, the mere sin of eating an apple or a fig, what must his abhorrence be of your lies, your slanders, your murders!' And then did you notice his quick observation of his people? Some one had raised his head and looked inquisitively, or doubtingly, for he immediately added, 'Yes, I see what you would say, and you are right;—it was not eating the apple or fig, or bunch of grapes, or whatever it might be; it was the sin of disobedience. True, you are right, it was the sin of disobedience!' Do you recollect his impressive pause at that moment, and the low,

solemn tone in which he added, ‘O think then of your ten thousand dangers! Adam and Eve had only one command to break! How have they been multiplied since? How, in the present state of society, with all its seductions and all its temptations, and with our loosened hold upon you, are they every day increasing!’ Was this keeping his flock in ignorance? Was this to say, as you have told me, ‘*Sin on—come and buy forgiveness?*’ My dear mother, I appeal to your justice. Open your ears again, and again think on the words he uttered, before you thus condemn a whole people. You say—and I am sure—I am unfit for the task; but you see that even I can prove, from what you heard last Sunday, that they are *not* kept in ignorance, and that if it were their profit to sell absolutions, they would not point out the fearful enormity of sin as Mr D’Alembert did. But my other objection to your information is founded on your own admission, that you know very little about them. As to their persecutions, our history tells us enough to show us that they have at least not monopolised persecution. What did that vulgar Scotch clergyman in Edinburgh say, when some one regretted the fine monasteries and abbeys that had

been laid low? Do you recollect? It was in broad vulgar Scotch."

"O! yes: 'Pull down the rookeries, and the rooks will forsake,' or something like that. Yes, I am sorry now that you listened to such illiberal abuse, because I see it has tended to stir up your compassion, and compassion is nearly allied to — But, Florence, there are points, on which, with all our ignorance of Popery, it is impossible to be mistaken. For instance, the pope's infallibility; and more—for human vanity might so intoxicate a man, though scarcely a succession—but that they should deem themselves possessed of the keys of heaven and hell!—should imagine that to this day miraculous powers are vested in them, and that they ought to be supreme over all earthly principalities and powers,—are really as incredible assumptions, as we are perfectly sure that they make them. No, Florence, to give up unbiassed, untutored—I should rather say, untortured—reason, on such points, is madness."

"And how long did Christendom submit to these absurdities?"

"Suppose that three hundred years elapsed before the pope's power was thoroughly organised, and that it remained in unshaken force

until the days of Calvin and the other reformers, we shall have eleven hundred years of Popery."

"*Eleven hundred years of unmixed error! Christian error!* Mother, I must know the truth of all this."

"Why? What is it to you? What can it ever be to you?"

"I cannot tell you *why*, but I feel that it must be a great deal to me. I shall know, if to know be possible, why that which was so long permitted, nay, sustained with a grandeur which fills the whole soul, is now abhorred, reviled, persecuted." This she uttered with flushed cheeks, sparkling eyes, and a deep, impassioned energy.

Mrs Stanhope was a woman of the most pure and strict morality. Even the depraved and depraving modes of genteel life, which teach that those things are merely polite, which are in fact a system, a tissue of lies, and which afford a ready apology to servants and children for falsehood to any extent, since nothing can be more authoritative, encouraging, consoling, and strengthening, than the example of our lord and lady, of our father and mother—even these things never corrupted the integrity of Mrs Stanhope. "Say I am abroad when I

am at home; delighted when I am grieved, or grieved when I am indifferent; approve of what I despise; and laugh at what I esteem, merely because it is unfashionable;—if I had no principle, my pride would revolt from anything so debasing.”

Such were often the remonstrances of Mrs Stanhope against the every-day and sadly demoralising practices of life, from a duke and duchess down to a farmer’s daughter, who has been six months at a boarding-school. * But with all this, she never gave herself any trouble upon points of disputation; indeed, she revolted from them in a most especial manner, for two reasons. The first was, that she wished to remain a sort of negative believer in what she had been taught—that is, she did not wish to imbibe any knowledge which would, as she termed it, unsettle her quiescent faith. The other was, that her good sense had been so often startled by the supported proposition, that all out of the faith are in danger of eternal punishment, that she felt, rather than acknowledged, that to disturb her faith by the principles of universal good will and compassion, would be no difficult task. She had been severely tried by the malice of man, and having

suffered when innocent, nay, where she would have disdained to be guilty, she was sedulously anxious to maintain an irreproachable character as to her creed, and to enjoy as far as was possible ease of mind. But she was mistaken; for in that point she suffered as deeply as in any other; for, with the zealous, a lukewarm, passive faith is worse, far worse, than none. It is, they say, a chronic disease, and hence hopeless; absolute unbelief is an acute disease, and therefore by prompt and severe medicine may be removed. Thus, while by shutting her eyes to books of universal knowledge, and her ears as far as possible to general and investigating conversation, and while she with equal care kept aloof from all points of doctrine, she was pitied by philosophers as one of whom something might have been made, and despised by zealous christians as a mere Laodicean. Such is fate; and how must every liberal mind, every mind aspiring to a distinct, clear knowledge of what is *untrue* (for it is too much to desire to know what is truth, speculatively speaking) mourn over the tyranny that *has* been, and that *is*, every hour exercised over the soul of man. In fact, while Mrs Stanhope probably plumed herself upon her veracity, she lived in a state

of wilful self-imposition. "I must not investigate the attributes, or at least the probable, the plausible, the (even) analogous attributes of God, lest I find them to differ from what I have been told to believe." In all else, Mrs Stanhope's mind was expansive and excursive; but in very early life she had gone down the stream passively, and at that period when a mind like hers might have ventured ashore, she was but too glad to sail on quietly and unobserved, and to keep herself from any fresh cause of reproach. Her daughter's remark fell on her ear like a death-knell, and she repeated the words, "I feel that it must be a great deal to me," with scarcely a possibility of defining her own thoughts. At last she said, "I beg you will explain to me why you are so anxious to dip more deeply into the Roman Catholic cause than I have explained, which I really think sufficiently satisfactory to any unprofessional person."

"Just because no religious service ever before made the most slight impression upon me; I heard as if I heard not, and I said as if I said not. I cannot describe my feelings; but when Mr D'Alembert spoke, it seemed as if I had never till that moment heard a spoken message

from the Deity:—and because their character in the world differs from what they at least seem to be, and that I am resolved to know what they really are.”

“ Florence,” said her mother, “ beware of what you are about. I am the last person living to harbour the most distant wish of putting any restraint on the thoughts of any human being, but certainly there can be no good reason for your abandonment of the faith in which you have been bred; and surely, my dear Florence, it is not for you, who have been brought up with enlarged and liberal ideas, to run after mere form.”

“ So far from that being the case—so far from loving the forms which I witnessed—I revolted from them, and it was the zeal, the piety, the peculiarly paternal authority, which drew forth emotions in me, that before I had not even a guess of. My astonishment was the greater, that I went to the place believing I should understand nothing that I heard—believing that to it there belonged little more than the name of church—nay, my dear mother, I blush to own it, I expected to hear a sort of mock sermon in Latin. Surely, it becomes those who seem to make it their employment to defame this grand

structure, to be really acquainted with it. When I heard Mr D'Alembert refer them to various parts of scripture, when I heard him exclaim, 'Does not your whole Bible point out to you God's hatred of sin?' I thought of all the calumnies which I had listened to against those very pastors, and the reported state of laboured ignorance in which they kept their flocks, and I said to myself, I shall know the truth of all this. I wonder if it was the deep sense of injustice which affected me so much, or if it was the mere power of what seems natural, unstudied eloquence. But I was singularly affected. I felt as if my eyes were incapable of following with sufficient perspicacity the varied expression of Mr D'Alembert's face, and as if my ears were not sufficiently open for the reception of his words; and so intense did my attention become, that in some measure it defeated itself." Florence paused, and blushed deeply, as if she were aware of her own extravagance, for modest youth shrinks from all exhibition.

In all her trials, Mrs Stanhope had never anticipated any other in respect to her daughter than the loss of her, or perhaps—for what woman glances not that way?—to some trial of the heart. But to find her on the verge of fana-

ticism, and that too in favour of a church which she understood to have been justly put down, was a thing for which she was entirely unprepared. It might end in her taking the veil; but, at any rate, it must end in giving mortal offence to her paternal uncle and sole guardian. Indeed, where is the Protestant who would at this moment look coolly on any member of his family becoming a Catholic? Whatever he may *not* know—and it is an immense deal—he does know that his future grandsons, nephews, or cousins, must be aliens in their own country, and that they cannot exclaim with Paul, ‘I was free-born.’ A moment’s recollection however served to show her two things; first, that Florence had the right, the unalienable right, of investigation; and next, that opposition in such a case, being one in which no *moral* objection could be made, would only strengthen inclination, and whet perversity. She therefore replied, with as much seeming indifference and composure as she could assume, that she should hear some others of the same church before she thoroughly made up her mind, for that it was impossible to suppose that human nature was actually changed in favour of one body of men, and that they, and they only, should remain in possession of zeal and autho-

city. "I am almost satisfied," she continued, "that when you find priests on a level with those you have heard amongst Protestants, that your original aversion from their superfluous and in many respects absurd forms will return, and you will be satisfied that it was the force of novelty alone which constrained your admiration."

"Then why did I feel apathetic in the midst of other novelties? In our journey through Scotland, what pleasure did I take in hearing their best orators? The zeal of the famous Dr T—— was too exuberant for my taste, and often seemed to verge on wrath. The smooth, oily eloquence of Mr G—— was coupled with doctrines so shocking to ordinary compassion, that his gentle appearance seemed to give the lie to his words. The young man, or rather boy, who jumped and sprawled, extended his eyes and inflated his nostrils, in imitation as it was said of the Brutus-looking doctor, for he really has a classic head, uttered sentiments, and in a strain of juvenile, upstart petulance, from which every well-disposed mind must revolt. I shall never forget the savage pleasure with which he screamed to his congregation, 'Sleep on, until you awake in hell!' And then the Episcopalians of the same school—

for you recollect Mr Dumblane told us, that on some points they more than met—seemed determined to atone for the real or imputed carelessness of past years by sending all delinquents by one swoop to eternal woe. Mother, compare Mr D'Alembert's eloquence with theirs, and you will find *it* the broad, unwasted river of 1800 years, and *theirs* the winter torrent of a day."

"And do you suppose, my dear Florence, that it will be found less sweeping on that account? Have I not told you of their intolerance, and that they hold all condemned out of their own pale?"

"And what do others? If Protestants deem Catholics safe, why the anxiety we hear of to convert them? An anxiety fully equal to that of our missionaries for other conversions."

"Take them on other ground, Florence, and you will find them as intolerant as the Scotch T——, or the English—I forget his name, but you recollect, that during his stay in Edinburgh, his evening invitations were, 'Coffee and prayers!' Massillon's best sermon is in defence of the doctrine that few will be saved. Indeed, Florence, you are captivated by perfumes, satin, embroidery; and, I will confess it, extraordi-

nary zeal, and with less of self than I ever witnessed. I believe, after all, it is there that his charm lies: other men preach themselves; he preaches his subject, and it only."

"My dear mother, if my love for you could be encreased, it is for that concession. As to the perfumes, satin, and embroidery, you must yourself plead guilty, for, like the poor Iron-mask's love of cambric, I have imbibed my taste from my mother."

Mrs Stanhope laughed and offered no more defence; and indeed she had already gone much out of her usual road.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN Sunday again came round, Florence reminded her mother of her promise, although it was with reluctance she passed the long narrow passage which led to the chapel of Mr D'Alembert, still she was anxious to learn the truth. Mrs Stanhope watched her daughter as well as she could, where the want of vis-à-vis seats is a great bar to inattention, during divine worship. By accident, she was more close to the altar than upon the preceding Sunday; indeed there was no gallery in that chapel; and Mrs Stanhope hoped, that the service being performed by a remarkably plain and uninteresting person, would tend to render more obvious what seemed to her superfluous and even childish observances.

It was impossible not to contrast the ease, the grace, and pictorial attitudes of Mr D'Alembert, with the dull, heavy manner of Mr Ashburn; but still more, his strong impressive and impor-

tant lessons, with an ill-delivered discourse on the antiquity, universality, and preeminence of the Romish church. "What a difference betwixt men!" thought Florence; "While this man upholds his particular system, he seems to forget the creatures for whom systems were formed. Mr D'Alembert's heart seems to expand for the whole human race; this man's, only for his particular church."

Mrs Stanhope felt sure that her point was gained; and willing to administer as much antidote at once as possible, she proposed walking about during the interval of divine worship, and returning again. They found the afternoon service altogether different from any they had ever seen before, there being, in addition to singing and praying, (all in English,) merely a few remarks upon the importance of early instruction. After church the priest mustered about a hundred children round the rails of the altar, and proceeded to catechise them. It seemed rather a task to him, and Florence, contrasting him by anticipation with Mr D'Alembert, resolved to see him in this new and interesting function. After he had finished this piece of labour, he portioned out their tasks for the next Sunday, first in the church's catechism, and next in a portion of

scripture to be committed to memory. This last happened to be that part of the 14th chapter of Matthew, in which the miracle of feeding the multitude is set forth; and he then shewed that he was not without his ignitable spark, by giving such a commentary on that passage, as was calculated to awaken in his elder auditors the virtue of solid, tangible charity, not that which exists in mere love, but that which feeds and clothes the poor, and to lay the foundation of genuine, heartfelt kindness in his younger ones. Mrs Stanhope knew that this was touching her daughter on a responding key, and we cannot conceal that she regretted having remained for this part of the service.

They walked out in silence, the one fearful that she had erred in letting her daughter hear so much, and the other more satisfied than ever that the Roman Catholics were a calumniated and injured people. The chapel formed the east centre of a small square, having on one side of it a school-house and suitable apartments for the teacher; on the other a slated shade with seats for the accommodation of those who might be too early, or wish to converse before going into worship with a friend; there was also a bench for soldiers to lay their caps and swords

on, and a well of water, with two or three little cans, for the purpose of giving drink to the thirsty; and Florence had remarked in the morning, that some poor people, who had probably walked far, seemed glad of this simple beverage. On each side of the square were four or five respectable looking houses, and the whole was terminated by an ample porch. On reaching this last, it began to rain with violence, and being destitute of any defence whatever, they stopped, at a loss what to do, because having their way back to enquire, they knew that their progress would be considerably retarded.

Feeling chilled by the keen blast which accompanied the rain, they turned, for the purpose of taking shelter in one of the houses on either side of the archway. Mrs Stanhope tapped lightly at a door, and with some hesitation; for though she had seen much of life, she had about her that quick sensibility which makes the heart beat and the cheek flush when about to encounter new faces under circumstances of even the slightest obligation. No token of having been heard was given; she hesitated, and again looked towards the street, but the rain ran upon it in little rivulets, and there was that haste,

care, and anxiety in every surrounding face, which might well banish the hope of aid or participation.

“Is it possible to get a coach?” said she, addressing a gentleman.

“I should think not: this shower, or rather torrent, must have cleared the next stand; and besides, who will go out to seek one that can avoid it?”

“True,” said Mrs Stanhope, feeling checked by even an implication that she should have expected such a sacrifice of clothes, if not of health, from any one.

“See, mother,” said Florence, “the door has opened, almost at my touch; let us go in.”

“I fear to intrude; and look! we are not the only persons who want shelter.”

Florence had proceeded, and left no choice for her mother, who followed her along a lobby of considerable length. On gaining a door at the farther end, Mrs Stanhope staid her daughter and said, “Upon my word, Florence, I feel afraid to proceed; let us stand where we are, or rather, let us return to the door, and remain there. The shower is so violent, that in all probability it will be very soon over. Nay, don’t open the door; we may intrude on sick-

ness or death, for there is a dark stillness about this place which chills me. Why are you so determined?"

"Because the tempest is fearful, and you know how delicate you are."

"No matter—stand here—we shall do very well; but I will *not* enter a room."

At that moment a side-door opened, and an elderly, housekeeper-looking woman desired them to walk in. Mrs Stanhope professed herself at a loss for an apology, and the good woman assured her that none was necessary in such a whirlwind; but added, "We'll shut the door; it's needless to let all the world in, and no doubt, many there may put in a claim:" and, drawing the inside bolt, she added, "Our door is most unfit for a town, and it's a wonder we have a spoon left to ourselves."

While these remarks of dubious hospitality went on, they had again reached the farther end of the lobby, when the old woman threw open a door, and presented a dark, sombre-looking apartment, which was furnished with a large sofa covered with black, chairs of the same hue, and having walls of a dubious colour, but not such as to promote cheerfulness. Two windows, the height and nearly filling the

breadth of the room, might have enlivened it, but the light was more than half excluded by the foliage of fruit-trees and luxuriant creepers.

“ Sit down, ladies, sit down : my master may be in directly, and may be not—just as it happens. A sick dog will keep him out for an hour, and, if need be, he will bring it home for me to nurse. I’m sure—but hush ! I think I hear him ; his is a heavy foot—I’m sure I wonder how the flesh keeps on him ! Contentment is great gain, they say—I dare say—Aye, he is into one of the side-rooms. Somebody for me, no doubt. Well, I’m sure——”

“ I really fear,” said Mrs Stanhope, “ that we are intruding sadly. Indèed, Florence, we had better go ; perhaps we may find a coach ; but at any rate, what does a little rain signify ? To be sure, you have been ill——”

“ Hush, ma’am, the young lady is engaged.”

On Mrs Stanhope turning round, she found her daughter contemplating with fixed attention a crucifix, which, with some other paintings by the first masters, hung in a deep recess, that was formed on one side of the room, and seemed fitted up for devotional exercises.

“ Very delicate-looking, indeed !” said their attendant. “ It would be the worth of my place

to let such a person out. Mr Ashburn will have her into one of the side rooms—I beg your ladyship's pardon; I mean, if she happened to be poor."

"Mr Ashburn!" said Mrs Stanhope. "Then we are in his house."

"No doubt, ma'am; I thought you knew that. I am sure you will be welcome; for he has a heart for the whole human race, as he says."

"He says! Does he say that of himself?"

"O! dear, no; but I hear him speak of that in his discourses; and indeed I need not mince the matter, he tells me that is what I should have; but it's not easy to see a man's substance wasted upon vagabonds. And then I have no help, for says he, 'Alice, I take no attendance, just that you may give it where it is due.' And after all he does, you never hear of him, in a comparison."

"I believe Mr D'Alembert is very popular."

"Yes, yes, as an oracular man. But what does that signify? It is what a man does, and not what he says. No doubt, he gives me a world of trouble—But hush! there he is in good earnest."

Mrs Stanhope instinctively rose, and stood

beside her daughter in the recess, so that she was not seen by those who entered.

“I assure you,” said a person in the voice she had heard half an hour before, “I am glad of every dispensation, which involves no one in evil, that brings me the pleasure of seeing you here. I know you seldom come so far from your own end of the town, and I shall be sorry if this deluge frighten you from taking another excursion of the same kind before winter set in. And now, my dear Dr Campian, and my young friend Edmund, set yourselves quietly down, and we shall have tea and coffee presently. I suppose, like me, you take your slight repast at mid-day?—Alice, bring us in some light and salutary comfort.”

“Yes, sir,” said she, at the same time making signs to the recess; but Mr Ashburn was too intent on his own hospitable purposes to observe her, and she was obliged at last to say, “Two ladies, sir; the rain was so heavy, and them so singular delicate-looking, that I knew you would be angry if I allowed them to pass.”

Mrs Stanhope was now obliged to come forward, and though a little embarrassed, made so graceful an apology, that had Mr Ashburn

been a churl, as he was the reverse, he must have been at least pacified.

On seeing Dr Campian, she resolved, first on keeping down her veil, and next on retreating, in spite of the weather; but Mr Ashburn was a man of thorough-going hospitality; and he told her with much earnestness, that to expose herself and daughter to such peril would distress him beyond measure, and that if she wished to confer a favour, she would first feel herself at home, and next assist him in doing the honours of the tea-table. "It is true," added he, "we are strangers to each other, and I suspect that curiosity, not holy consanguinity, brought you to us,—for I observed you both;—but the time of need, be it great or small, is the time in which all are brethren. It were indeed well if we had more christian truth and sincerity;—but if you were not what you seem, *I* cannot suffer, and *you* perchance—Who knows?"—Here he paused, sighed, and then went on with, "Aye, more likely it may be with the humility of conscious error—but I wander. Your faces betoken the dignity of high, it may be, a proud consciousness of rectitude; and let us, whate'er our creeds, leave all that, and forget

all ceremony, and indulge in the simple fancy, that the elements themselves now and then send us back to pristine times, by subjecting us to such inconveniences, as force us from the unnatural restraints of artificial life."

Strangely mixed as this speech was, Mrs Stanhope felt relieved; and reading in his round, red face, and full eager eyes, an extreme anxiety that she should share in his hospitality, and be safe from the tempest of wind and rain, she resolved to throw aside those punctilious feelings, by which we are indeed in such thralldom as often to make us sigh for the "ever-open door of the Cilician."

Florence had by this time turned from the pictures which had absorbed her attention, and stood ready to be guided by her mother. The elder Campian, though shocked at this meeting with persons whom he dreaded, had rallied himself, and made one of his best bows, muttering at the same time a hope that the young lady was now entirely recovered. The youth, more agitated than he himself approved of, leant against one of the two corresponding pillars which assisted in intercepting the small quantity of light admitted by the windows; while Mr Ashburn was whispering some stimulating hints

to his housekeeper,—first as to certain cakes, which she seemed unwilling to produce,—cold ham, which he said the ladies might relish, and which he hoped would tempt the feeble appetite of Dr Campian,—and finally, in a still lower key, added, “ But see first to a man and woman, and two little children, that I have put into the first left-hand room.”

“ Yes, sir,” was the reply, while she walked out with that dogged air which indicates the feeling of an inflicted hardship.

Mrs Stanhope was not entirely free from the embarrassment which should have belonged entirely to Dr Campian; and it was not until Mr Ashburn had again expressed his joy at having that gentleman and his son as his guests, that she could look the elder confidently in the face. She was before struck with admiration of its fine lineaments, and again sympathised in the look of intense sensibility by which it was pervaded. He paid little attention, apparently, to Mr Ashburn’s reiterated welcome; for having gone two miles, in order to avoid all chance of meeting or seeing the dangerous pair, he recollected the fate of prince Agib’s victim, and felt a conviction that his son’s was as surely doomed.

Edmund guessed at the state of his father’s

too easily perturbed spirit, and wishing to prevent such a termination as often took place on occasions of comparatively slight excitation, asked him to look at the paintings in the recess, thinking in this manner to divert his attention. But, either from agitation or some other cause, old Campian stumbled when passing Mrs Stanhope, and was glad to save himself from a fall by catching hold of her shoulder.

“ My dear sir,” said she, while sustaining his feeble frame, “ it is strange——”

She paused; his jealousy was roused, and he replied quickly, “ What is strange?”

“ That *I*——” again she paused, aware that she could say nothing which would not appear utterly absurd. Thought is quick; the next instant placed before her the possibility of his son and her daughter forming an attachment, and the facilities which such an attachment would afford to the ripening of the yet immature predilection she had formed in favour of Popery. Instantly bracing up her mental strength, she resolved to check all the kindness with which her heart overflowed to the old man, and to be as firm in cutting short the acquaintance as he had before evinced himself.

Old Campian was superstitious to a great de-

gree; but we need not wonder at this, when we recollect the wiser men who have been so; and besides, one of the leading tenets of his church is grounded in what *we* deem gross superstition, viz. the endurance of miracles, since Catholics have not, like us, been able to discover the precise period at which simple nature should resume her reign, and supernatural agency be forever set aside. He recovered himself; but feeling perfectly assured that in some way or other he should sink before Mrs Stanhope, he gazed upon her as if, since his doom was fixed, he would at least have the pleasure of feasting his eyes on her beautiful and expressive countenance.

“It is strange indeed,” said he, “if you knew all.”

“If I knew all!” said Mrs Stanhope greatly moved, “If I knew all! This is the second time these words have passed your lips in reference to me. For the love of pity, say if you ever heard of me?”

Dr Campian continued to look upon her, but spoke not.

“For heaven’s sake,” said she, “relieve me; say at once what it is.”

“I cannot tell you what it is, but I solemnly declare that I never heard of you until your

maid called me up, and I have never heard of you since."

"Then why"—said she eagerly; but checking herself she added, "No, I am wrong—your assurance that you know nothing of me is enough."

"Mother," said her daughter, who seemed to gather to herself the presence of mind which belonged to the whole, "you are placing yourself in a very strange light, and leading this gentleman—all these gentlemen—to suppose that you dread being known, whereas your only misfortune is in *not* being known."

"You are right, Florence; it is indeed a mean, despicable thing, to care so much about what others think, when all is fair within."

"And all without," said old Campian, at last yielding to his natural sincerity; "and I must apologise for my repeated rudeness, and perhaps at some other time explain——" Just then his eye wandered from poor Mrs Stanhope to his son, whose attention was so obviously rivetted on the younger lady, that every risk rushing at once upon his mind, he sunk into the first seat and fainted.

Mrs Stanhope, who was a stranger to the doctor's infirmity, now felt assured that she alone

was the cause of such repeated agitation in her presence, and she exclaimed, "Poor old man! this is twice that the sight of me has disturbed him. There must be a cause for this."

His son, while administering the proper restoratives, which he never went without, hastened to relieve her, by first stating that his father was subject to such fits, and by next assuring her that his agitation in her presence had no individual connexion with her.

This was certainly true in the outline, for any other tolerably fair pair of heretics would have produced some anxiety, though it is probable that nothing less attractive could have caused in him such overwhelming fear.

It was only by degrees that the hospitable intents of Mr Ashburn were diverted; for being of course a bachelor, he had become, what is sufficiently teasing and inexcusable in females, apt to think that without a great deal of obvious trouble no comfort can be procured for the immediate objects of solicitude. His attention had been slightly withdrawn from a cupboard, when Mrs Stanhope began her appeal to Dr Campanian; but the cordials in his hands, and the contemplation of other sources of comfort, more than diverted her claims upon him in the way of

sentiment. However, when his friend fainted, he so far forgot his dread that Alice should be tardy, as to offer his assistance on this still more pressing call. But Edmund assured him that he required no other than a little cold water wherein to mix some hartshorn; and, after waiting with some impatience to see the doctor recover, he withdrew.

Mrs Stanhope now found herself more embarrassed than ever; for even with the countenance of her host, and that chiefly directed towards herself and daughter, she had found her situation sufficiently awkward. She rose and looked out, meditating an immediate escape; but it still rained, and though not in torrents, the case was more hopeless, for it was now a calm, steady, persevering descent from the clouds; and might not unaptly, compared with the preceding half hour, represent the difference between a sulky and a violent man. Dejected and uncomfortable, she resumed her seat, while the very darkness of the room seemed to add to her uneasy and perturbed sensations. Neither of the Campians attempted a word; the mother and daughter exchanged looks of despair; and notwithstanding Mr Ashburn's excellent remarks on the abuses of ceremony, neither

felt free from blame for having, by an abandonment of it, been thrown into a situation of at least doubtful propriety.

At last Mr Ashburn appeared, and close behind him his sole domestic. "I tell you, woman," said he with a red face and flaming eyes,—"I tell you, that duty should never sleep, kindness never slumber, thrift never come within five hundred miles of compassion."

"But, sir——"

"No remonstrating with me! Did I not say to have soup for the poor and comfits for the rich, if so be that our gates were honoured with the latter. False woman! Had I not been in the way, those vagrants, those starving fellow-mortals, had tasted nothing better than a dry sapless crust! Fie upon you! out upon you! But where fell ye in with such viands? Have you saved them and laid them in a dry oven since the third week of September? Woman! how often shall I tell thee that a voluntary fast and a cumpulsatory one hath two opposite effects. The one softens down the passions, and though it may be that there is sometimes a little spiritual pride and self-complacency in the case, yet the whole effect, that is, where health permits"—looking at Dr Campian—"the whole effect,

where health permits, is salutary. Insomuch as I have often forced upon your most obdurate ears that mortification, if voluntary—or imposed by a kind spiritual father, which ought to be the same thing—gives, whether he will or not, a kind of repose to man's peccancies; gives him time and inclination to look within—tends to root out envy, hatred, and malice; and, though last, not the least to my purpose, gives him a taste, if I may so speak, of what those suffer who have nothing to eat. But the reverse of all this is the case with him who fasts from hard necessity—no matter though it be his own fault, as you often tell me, thou second Nabal—no matter; he is our brother in need. I say the very reverse of all this is effectuated upon him who fasts because he cannot help it. Instead of envy, hatred, and malice being repressed, they are stirred up and brought into fearful and direful action. Look at Ireland! Look at the poor, thoughtless, kindly-hearted creatures, forced by sheer want to envy those they would willingly worship; to hate those whom they are inclined to love as brothers; and at last, when worked up by the pangs of want, they perform the very last act of malice. But I will punish you—Here, take that to them.”

“That!” said she with irrepressible surprise.

“ Yes, *that*—is it so wondrous? Do not the rich swallow them in pairs, and in triplets? Will it poison a poor man for want of use? Think ye their stomachs are differently constructed? Did I not try to soften down your hard heart, by taking you into that very recess and confronting you with the good Samaritan? Read you the words of a heretic—yea, some say an infidel heretic—even the man Cobbett, who, be he what he may, hath wrought a good and a just work in setting forth the sad, sad change to the poor of the land since our dispensing hands were tied up, or rather chopped off; and did you not then promise to be kind and faithful in your ministration? A piece of dry crust! It cannot be that you are of our fold! You must have been nurtured by those who, when they do give, tremble lest the poor should have even a glimpse of comfort. Why don’t you go with the bottle, or must I again leave my company?”

“ I was waiting, sir, till you had done speaking.”

Mr Ashburn’s wrath was now at its acme; and taking up a bottle of port in one hand, and two small cuffee-cups in the other, he marched out.

“ I am sure, ma’am” said Alice to Mrs Stan-

hope, "by this time you must have a very poor opinion of me; but only think of giving a bottle of port wine to a poor starved man and woman; it will fly to their heads, and who will be blamed? The poor creatures, to be sure—and on a Sunday too—they will be seized and carried to a lock-up house. Me hard-hearted! Me a Nabal! But how can I make soups and attend church at the same time? I am sure in some respects I would be better with——" Here she met Dr Campian's eye, and after a pause she added—"with a married gentleman, for a mistress is sometimes a great comfort."

Hearing her master's heavy step, and it fell upon her ear at that moment with a double weight, she busied herself in putting forth cups and saucers; and having profited by the admonition so liberally bestowed, she explored every nook and corner of her repositories, and in half an hour the table groaned under a load of ham, tongue, tea, coffee, bread and butter, cake and confections.

Mr Ashburn glanced first at his board and next at his guests, and then saying grace, begged that they would punish his miserable housekeeper by eating heartily. "I wonder," said he, "that I keep the creature—I often wonder at it—for

she is a continual cause of offence: and I know, Dr Campian, that I have even now greatly erred; but, after all, she is acquainted with my ways, and, with vigilance on my part, I take care that her duties shall be performed. And now, madam, will you dispense the tea; and you, my pretty maiden, pour out some coffee, and let us forget, in God's comforts, our late turmoils. I am glad, my good old friend, to see you restored. I fear, young Mr Edmund, I seemed neglectful; but I know that where you are, all is safe; and besides, these fair ladies could lend better aid than mine. It is—at least it was formerly—the task of ladies to nurse the sick."

"But," said Edmund, "your housekeeper hinted, and I think with some propriety, that people unused to wine, and especially when half-famished, may get intoxicated; and should they ramble out in that state, may suffer seriously."

"Did she so?" said he, with renewed anger. "The hypocrite knows full well that no poor wretch leaves my house on a Sunday. I know I did wrong, but she provoked me. Rely upon it, that Parnel's silver cup would not soften her heart; it is only by shewing her that if she

withhold, I'll exceed, that anything can be done. I have locked them in," said he, relaxing into good humour, "and should they exceed, they must e'en sleep it off. To-morrow I shall try to place them in some sort of employment; if they are deserving, it is my duty: if not, the loss is theirs. The world greatly errs, Dr Campian, in fearing to do too much. What though we be cheated nineteen times in twenty? 'The disgrace of being duped!' say the worldly-wise. Good sooth! if we have no heavier disgrace, we are indeed blessed."

Nothing tends more, perhaps scarcely anything so much, to unite into one community very opposite natures than a common meal, when the parties are well appetised. If an ordinary repast of bread and cheese and a pot of porter, or something equally vulgar and homely, can in a great measure assimilate four or five heterogeneous or may be hostile persons, all alike hungry or exhausted by fatigue or unavoidable abstinence, the same individuals will unquestionably be rendered more sociable by a repast composed of delicacies. So it was in the present instance: Mr Ashburn's wrath was quenched; Dr Campian's fears were forgotten, and his irritability softened; Mrs Stanhope's scruples and

suspensions removed; and—— Here, fortunately for the dignity of our tale, there is a break in our train of animal enjoyment.

Florence poured out the coffee; but she scarcely saw to whom it was sent: she stirred and sipped her own, but she was nearly unconscious of its taste: while she eat a little, rather by the force of imitation than from any desire to do so. Her mind was in a state of complete abstraction. In religion, as in love, the votary imagines that a particularly over-ruling Providence has led him or her into the desired path. No matter how trivial the causes,—no matter how apparently adverse to the object in view,—the mind once prepossessed finds the finger of God in every movement. Not that Florence Stanhope supposed that salvation, eternal salvation, was to be found only in this or that body, in this or that church; but so far were her feelings of reverence excited in favour of Catholics, and so far was her indignation roused at the injustice with which she had heard them treated, that it had become a principle with her to yield to the first, and to have her eyes thoroughly opened and her judgment well informed as to the last. Chance, or Providence, had brought her to the very centre of that information for

which she longed; her eyes had been, and were, feasted by various beautiful though but obscurely seen objects of reverence, and she fancied—perhaps she was right—that very few clergymen of any order possessed the theory and practice of such substantial charity.

Of Edmund Campian, need we say more than that he was in love, and what man in the first stage of that passion cares for meat or drink? But more than love annoyed him—the whole of his duties ran counter to his inclinations, nay, demanded, and that imperiously, an utter and steady relinquishment of them.

While these things were passing in the minds of the young persons, and Mr Ashburn had somewhat ‘appeased the rage of hunger,’ he seized the arm of Florence, beside whom he had placed himself, and looking eagerly in her face, said, “My dear young lady,—Florence, as I think your mother calls you: and it is a sweet name, and wafts us to those shores which — but I may not launch out upon that topic;—Florence, I say, you have eaten nothing, and I know that you did not dine.”—She looked up. “Yes,” said he, as if in reply to her tacit enquiry, “I know that you did not dine: for I marked your deep, undeviating, and sleepless

attention. Alas ! too many come to my little sanctuary ill-prepared, at least ill-fitted, for the duties they pretend to ; nay, scarcely possessing sufficient purity of spirit to entitle them to cast their eyes on the blessed representation of what was done for them. But this is a digression from your want of dinner and your present unnecessary abstinence."

" I came," said she, blushing deeply, and with a palpitating heart, " I came for the purpose——"

" For what purpose, my child ?" In saying this, Mr Ashburn tightened his hand upon her arm into a grasp ; his eyes opened wide, and he gazed upon her with an intensity of attention which betrayed a soul divided between hope and anxiety. She was still silent. " Say, what purpose ?"

" To hear the truth," said she, in a faltering tone.

" To hear the truth ! and from us !" He loosened his hold of her arm, and leaning back, looked upon her as if he would dive into the very bottom of her heart. " I know," said he, " that you are not one of us : for I observed that with all your attention, you gave not our outward sign of faith, our token of a memory which never

fails us on the point whereon all hinges. ‘Take up your cross and follow me,’ seems far, far from him who seems terrified to acknowledge that cross, and scandalized by those who do it.”

Florence feared that in some measure she was deceiving him, for she could not yet count upon the extent or permanency of her feelings. Her soul was the seat of candour, and she replied, with as much firmness as she could muster, “I came rather to *know* than to *hear* the truth.”

“How? to know rather than to hear! Explain yourself.” Florence looked at her mother. “I would rather hear the explanation from you,” said Mr Ashburn, who probably read something of disapproval in Mrs Stanhope’s face: “I would rather hear it from you,” he repeated in a solemn tone, again pressing her arm hard; and, looking at her with endearing kindness, added, “Remember, Florence, this is no child’s play—no fairy tale—no key to a romantic story—it is God’s eternal, unchanged, unbroken, and continuous truth that we have in view. No,” said he, clasping his hands, and casting up his eyes, and drawing a deep breath as if he would pour out his whole soul; “No! it was never intended that God’s church should be left without an ostensible head, and that there should not be

an unbroken chain, encompassing the whole earth like unto an unconsumable zone ; that there should not be within the circle of that zone a people undivided and undividable ! See we not that God has left us a monument of his eternal word, as a living and speaking miracle—his ancient people, who while scattered are still the same, and who while bearing a heavy curse are yet left to tell, in spite of themselves, a tale that gives verification to us ! And shall the new, the universally vivifying word of God, be left to be tossed about according to the fancy of every fond, ignorant, and conceited fool, until amongst such it scarcely has a form remaining ? Speak, then, my child, and say what it is you mean by coming to *know* rather than to *hear*. I see you are beset by that timidity which becomes you so well ; but who so used as we to understand all the tremors, all the hopes, and all the despondings of a sincere, God-loving heart ?”

He uttered these words in a tone of such deep feeling, and with a countenance so expressive of that simplicity of mind, which, when accompanied by true wisdom, is more calculated than all the eloquence of man to encourage and embolden the timid, and as it were to draw forth and mingle their sympathies with the encouraging

speaker. So his look operated upon Florence ; and banishing as much as possible the timidity natural to her sex, and still more to her age, she said, “ My mother took me last Sunday to hear Mr D’Alembert.”

“ Did she ?” said Mr Ashburn, leaning forward and bending down his head as if in obeisance, “ that was well, for he is a great orator, and what is far better, a good man. But I interrupt ; go on.”

“ We went to hear Mr D’Alembert, and I was very much surprised with his earnestness, for I never saw its like before, and delighted with his instructions, and——”

“ And what ?”

“ I was ashamed, deeply ashamed, of having hitherto been so ignorant and so unjust ; for, indeed, from all I have lately heard, I imagined that you read and even preached in Latin ; and that so far from any reference being made to the Bible, that it was, as I once heard a clergyman say, a sealed book to your hearers.”

Mr Ashburn groaned, and seeing her pause said, “ Go on ; you interest me much.”

But, strange as it may seem, this encouragement abashed her ; she felt as if making an oration, and her mother quickly perceiving her em-

barrassment said, "I see, Mr Ashburn, that Florence cannot go on; permit me to speak for her, and believe me, as they say in law courts, 'I shall in nought extenuate or conceal;' and to convince you of this, I shall even confess myself to you, in as far as the unfolding of my dear Florence's mind demands. Whether it be right or wrong in me to be so, I am a person of liberal opinions; that is to say, I believe there is salvation in every church and amongst every denomination of Christians. I am besides, though an Episcopalian, somewhat indifferent as to where I hear sermon, and——"

"It indeed matters not," said Mr Ashburn, with a deep sigh, "what the superficies are, if the texture is not compact and firm. What, suppose a vase should be formed of the best earth that China ever produced, and suppose upon its exterior should be defined the best imagery of human skill; what, I say, will signify all that labour and all that waste of invention and of art, if the vessel be not afterwards tried by fire? Will it not fall to pieces at the first removal? So it was with the poor distracted creatures who set aside the well-tried vase of ages; who took indeed into their impious hands the pure material, who formed of it a vessel, but

who could not give to it that unity and durability which indeed could belong only to one—And see—behold—look upon its shattered atoms! But I crave your pardon; go on.”

Mr Ashburn was a man of what might be called deep sincerity; it was pure and unmixed: he had never known a selfish wish as to his own prosperity in life, and had never been actuated by one anxious thought as to himself. Born to a large fortune, he had early devoted himself and it to the cause of the Catholic church and of general humanity; and as soon as he was entirely master of his paternal property, he parted with what he thought necessary to the comfort of such of his relations as were not independent, and enjoyed all the happiness which this life can bestow in performing the duties of his office without fee or reward, and in administering to the poor of all denominations. But he was not, either by nature or by art, an orator; yet, when he got warmed upon his favourite topic, the fervor, the zeal, and entire singleness of his heart, were so depicted in his face, air, and gestures, that perhaps few persons in colloquial intercourse were ever more impressive.

Mrs Stanhope felt awed and even intimidated;

but her daughter's interests were at stake, and rousing all her courage, she proceeded: "Whether it was right or wrong to indulge my curiosity, I know not; to *me* it could not be wrong, for I did not think so—"

"Dangerous error! Why, any one may set up a conscience, as he would a puppet, and say, 'This is mine; I shall make it play as I choose.' But what can be expected of those who have no head?"

"We have lately travelled a good deal, and I took her, in passing through Scotland, to hear some of its principal orators."

"That is the fashion, I learn, and pulpit eloquence has become an exhibition," said the priest with a bitter smile. "However, proceed."

"I took her to hear some of the best Scotch orators; but previous to our journey, we were under the ministration of a peculiarly cold and inanimate Episcopalian. Florence turned with apathy from the whole. She said the Presbyterians were either loud and vulgar, or else aimed at a coaxing softness which betokened a want of sincerity; while the others seemed to mistake heat for eloquence: and of our Episcopalian she said, he read his task like an inanimate school-boy who longs to be at liberty. On

coming to this town, I thought it proper she should see the service of that church, which certainly on many accounts, especially its antiquity, demands our respect; but—pardon me—I did not anticipate its making so strong an impression.”

“I think, madam, it was the instructions of Mr D’Alembert which made the impression rather than the service, though in it there is nothing which ought not to make an impression, for in all its parts it has its uses, or its symbols.”

“It is my most earnest wish,” said Mrs Stanhope solemnly, “to be very candid, and in nothing more than to prevent you from forming expectations of any lasting change in my daughter. She is young, and of a lively, quick sensibility, and her judgment not being matured, she is consequently captivated by novelty. I mean no disrespect,—far, very far from it,—but I see that you are actuated by the best and purest motives, and therefore I should feel for your being disappointed, as I am certain you must be in this case.”

“You talk of the force of novelty,” said he. “Why then was she not captivated by the great orators of the northern capital?”

“I cannot tell—they did not suit her taste.”

“ Her *judgment*, it may rather be.”

“ I am not fond of argument on any subject, and least of all upon religion, and I am willing that you should account for her sudden partiality in any way; but I told her, that before she judged finally, before she made up her mind to believe that true impressive eloquence was to be found only in the most ancient church, that she should hear as many of its pastors as are within her reach.”

“ Well then, my dear madam, let her answer be the test. Are you still pleased, Florence?”

“ Yes, even more than at first.”

“ I have only to say, since that is the case, that if it is not a matter of judgment, it is a divine call, for of all our labourers, I am the least eloquent. In zeal—O! that at this period of calumny and reproach and persecution, I could prove it—in zeal, I will yield to none, but in eloquence I am less than a novice. It is true, none of us aim at that rhetoric which seizes on the imagination and leaves the head empty, or fills it with froth, and which sends the auditor away charmed and entranced, he cannot tell why. But I am unskilful in that which we do aim at,—to teach humility where we cannot comprehend—submission to the Di-

vine will—and love, unbounded love, for our fellow-creatures. I recommend these things, but I cannot, like Mr D'Alembert, enforce them. But still, Florence, it is unexplained that you came to know the truth rather than to hear it. That seems a strange distinction."

"Perhaps," said she, "it is a foolish one; but I meant that I want first to know whether I am mistaken in believing that I shall find in your church, what hitherto I have not found,—a something that, as it were, fills and satisfies my mind? And next, I wish to fall in with some intelligent person who can inform me why you are aspersed, and if you cannot defend yourselves?—You know, mother, I told you that I *must* be informed on that point, and therefore I expressed myself as I did."

Mrs Stanhope felt distressed, but recollecting her former reasoning with herself, she determined on being still quiescent; and besides, she could not in common politeness offer any argument, in Mr Ashburn's house, against her daughter's avowed determination. Florence had nothing more to add; her mother courted silence; the mind of each Campian was deeply occupied, and Mr Ashburn seemed lost in

thought. At last he repeated the words—"An intelligent person!"

"There are many to be found."

"But you are so ingenuous—and so—so—in short, you must be properly instructed—that is, if I have your mother's leave."

"My mother is too just to refuse justice to others."

"My dear child," said Mrs Stanhope, "think what you are about. Can it be of the slightest importance to the immense body of Catholics, to have justice rendered to them by such obscure individuals as you and myself? Do not, my dear Florence——"

"I crave your pardon," said Mr Ashburn, "but you forget that the immense body you talk of is composed of single individuals; that our opponents are also composed of single individuals: you forget that all the converts we or our opponents ever made, began at first at one single point; that should either party stand with folded arms and shut mouths, until each *imagined* unimportant individual should drop off, few would be left; and those few, unsupported, would lose their strength and importance. No, madam; even setting the vast, the incalculable,

the eternal consequences to a human soul aside, were it in my nature to do so,—I must consider the conventional claims that our body have upon me; but I consider also the rights of a parent, and, as I guess, a sole parent.”

“ Florence,” said Mrs Stanhope, with an air of extreme agitation, “ it is for you also to consider, and you know well to what I shall be exposed. I appeal to your compassion. You are aware, that upon your devoted mother has been, and will be, charged every evil which but seems to be within her sphere, however little ——”

“ Evil !” said Mr Ashburn, swelling with indignation; “ O ! that I should live to hear it thought an evil, that a young, a —— but that matters not—though even that may be a snare, in a wicked age like this,—that I should live to hear it thought an evil, that a young and virtuous mind should feel the crying iniquity of seeing the reformers, yes, the true reformers, of each hemisphere, called an evil thing, to be avoided like plague or pestilence !”

“ Indeed, my dear sir,” said Mrs Stanhope, “ you do me cruel wrong. The truth is—you will be angry and shocked when I say it—but

I believe all here to be true and honourable men, and therefore, I say,—that I care little about those things, and that all I court in this life is my daughter's society and peace, but of these I shall be robbed, if she persevere in this pursuit."

Heavy clouds gathered on the brow of Mr Ashburn, as he walked in silence through the now almost dark apartment.

"But," continued Mrs Stanhope, "we are forgetting what more immediately concerns us, and what we must attend to: it is nearly dark, and we are two long miles from home. I wonder if it is possible to procure a coach?—Florence, I have indulged you too much, and I fear I am now to do a fearful penance."

This was uttered in that fretful and half-angry tone, which the best tempered and most kindly are at times subject to, and perhaps the more so, from the conviction of being but too prone to concede.

"And we, too," said the elder Campian, "are foolishly late; but the carriage which we hired for the day is within my son's call—Be so good, Edmund, as to order it immediately."

Edmund stood for an instant, looked at his

father, approached, and uttered the words, "Could we not—" but he quickly shrunk back, and went on his mission.

Mr Ashburn walked about like a chafed lion, and seemed to wait for some overture that would enable him to come out of his anger with a good grace; and the first was from Mrs Stanhope, who holding out her hand, and expressing her thanks for his hospitality and for the interest he had expressed in her daughter, wished him good night.

It is probable that Mrs Stanhope's politeness might have led her to apologise for anything she had uttered which might be construed into a slight of or reproach to his church; but she could not help feeling as if he had wished to wrench her daughter from her, if not to encourage her in a sort of rebellion.

Florence was too much hurt to speak, and drawing her veil close over her face, was inclined to pass on; but politeness, regret, and shame, at once assailed her, and feeling weak from contending emotions, she leant with all her weight against the side of the lobby, where there happened to be a door. It opened upon her sudden pressure, and an old man blind of one eye, a woman nearly as old, another female

about thirty, with an infant asleep on her lap, presented themselves to Florence, just as by a ready presence of mind she balanced herself so as to avoid a serious fall.

“How comes this?” said Mr Ashburn. “Your door is badly fastened; a more ponderous person might have met with serious injury. I am glad to see that you have got a lamp and a Bible; this place is somewhat dark. How has the child been all day? I have had little time to ask—indeed, to confess the truth, I forgot you. It is wonderful Alice did not contrive to do so too.”

During this address to the younger female, Florence was occupied in examining the room. It contained two beds and four chairs, and was evidently fitted up for the accommodation of such guests as its present inmates, who were common vagrants.

“Indeed I had quite and entirely forgotten you, but I dare say that was because I knew your press contained food for a day or two, and I dismissed you, as it were, from my mind, like a paid debt. I see your tea-kettle: I hope you made good tea for yourselves?”

“O yes, your reverence, indeed we did—and I have just been saying to my father and

mother, that we shall be all the worse for this—but that is no fault of yours, only we shall ill bide the bitter blast after such quarters.”

“Enough for the day is the evil thereof. I shall get you safe back to Ireland; and let me advise you never again to attempt getting hired in a country which has nearly as many beggars as your own.”

The young woman began a fresh speech, but Mr Ashburn hastily withdrew, and Florence said, “I thought there were two children?”

“O, these are different people.—Alice, bring a candle here.”

She obeyed, and Mr Ashburn, taking a key from his pocket, opened a door on the other side—“Aye,” said he, “just as I expected—there they are fast asleep, poor creatures!—Nothing in earth surprises me like thinking it Quixotic madness to shelter and feed poor houseless creatures, at a fiftieth part of the cost which a small dinner-party would put me to;—and oh! how much more delightful, how much more enlarging to the heart, to see these four starving creatures filled and asleep, than to gorge as many dressed-out idle fools! But, they tell me, *these* are idle—No doubt, so they are, and for the best of reasons: they can find

nothing to do. But if they were even viciously idle, is not kindness the best and most likely way to reclaim them? And if they will not be reclaimed, am I the worse for entertaining them for one night? Alas! for the simple days when every door was open to every wanderer! Where are those days? They are swallowed up in science, luxury, and pride! While a small portion of the human mind is boasting of its achievements, and exclaiming, ‘See what man is capable of,—see the most certain proof that he possesses an immaterial part—see how he soars—he is already well nigh unto the third heaven!’—Alas! alas! what is the state of the rest? Manual facilities multiplied by science, until there is not a shadow of employment left for the great mass. Yes, Florence, this is a goodly sight for eyes like yours—and while you gaze upon these poor creatures, see if your mind can embrace the idea that there are hundreds in this town, upon this very night, this evening of an appointed day of rest, who have not where to lay their heads, who have not one morsel to put in their mouths!”

He sat down, and seemed overcome by the intensity of his sympathies; and, uneasy as Mrs Stanhope was by her protracted stay, she found

it impossible to break in upon his thoughts. At last, rising and taking up the candle, which he moved round upon his sleeping guests, as if to let Florence observe them well, he said, half smiling, "I know it is absurd—preposterous—to entertain such persons with wine; but she provoked me by neglect of my orders—and see—they have not abused my confidence in their moderation, though, to confess the truth, I did not think of that, for I was in anger. Yes, we may well pity the backslidings of poor untaught creatures, since the men whose business is self-restraint yet ever and anon find evil passions even boiling over in them. Tell me, Florence," said he, again sitting down, "are you not by this time satisfied that I am not entitled to lead you into the path of truth, when you have seen me aberrate so grossly from that of self-command?"

"No, indeed, I am delighted with all I have seen. Your anger was in the cause of humanity and——"

"Ay, there it is—there is the sad *ignis fatuus*; our very virtues lead us astray—But go on with your remark."

"I was going to say, that both my mother

and myself can bear testimony to the respect and reverence entertained for you by Alice."

"Indeed! say you so? I never knew as much, and I have often thought that in her heart she must hate me, for I am sometimes a sad tyrant. Yes, Florence, the esteem even of the person that you assume mighty power over is sweet—but sweetest of all is our own. Remember that, and strive to gain it. Poor Alice! after all, she is a good creature, and all her little savings are what she fancies for my interest. But the fool should know that I have no interests save one, and that is God's service. And how can I serve God better, after the first great call, than to feed and satisfy the craving, hungry appetite of them who are perishing for want? A great man, though a heretic, yet he had a smack and savour of us, and those who would malign him say that he was a Catholic in his heart—he declares, that the man who is indifferent as to what he eats and drinks will be indifferent about everything else. Now, I am a man—You see, Florence, I am confessing even unto you—strange and novel confessor, sure enough!—and remember, I espouse not the doctrines of him who held up the supremacy

of your sex;—but I will confess to you that I am a man (who when not under church restraint and church discipline, for there is a distinction, the former being permanent, the other occasional and temporary)—who am not indifferent as to what I eat or drink; that is, whatever the fare, I would have it the best of its kind; if, for instance, bread and water are the order of the day, I would have the one like new drifted snow, and the other sparkling from an unalloyed fountain—always excepting special penance. Some men have acute palates, others obtuse; the one has no crime in his nicety, the other no merit in the reverse. And this high relish of my palate—quite a natural thing—enables me to sympathise with, to *reciprocate*, as the great Johnson would have said, in the enjoyments of others. And when I give something good to the taste as well as satisfying to the appetite, I confess that I have, as it were, a second-hand and even selfish pleasure in the enjoyments of others. And when I hear a man or woman declare that to him or her the nature of the food is a matter of indifference, I am morally certain that such persons will be mighty indifferent as to what a starving beggar eats, or perhaps whether he eats at all. But I see Mrs —— I beg

your pardon, but during all this conversation—and some of it has been of great importance,—I mean to the young lady I am still ignorant of your name.”

“ Stanhope.”

“ Stanhope—it is a goodly name; there is much in names; the very sound of some elevates your sentiments, and sends your thoughts back to other and better times; others, again, narrow and circumscribe the imagination. My own name——But I see you are anxious to be gone, and no wonder, for it waxeth late. I should not have detained you so long, and with such seeming inattention to your comfort, and indeed to propriety, had I not intended to see you home in safety.”

“ I shall not,” said she, “ affront your sincerity, nor your indifference to a little trouble, by refusing your protection, especially as I am not used to walking out after dark.”

“ I observe that you understand true politeness. The poor dean, whose ashes it has become the fashion to rake up in this scandal-loving age, gives an excellent reproof to those who add the sin of falsehood to the tortures of bad breeding. Yes, they might have let the champion of Ireland rest in his grave. Whatever were his

faults and his heresies, I love him for his boldness in defence of that misruled land.—At two hundred yards distance you can get a coach, and as it is late only in a relative sense—that is, if you were to go home alone, and especially on foot,—I shall insist on this young lady eating something before she go. Nay, I will have my own way; she is very pale, and looks like one who has not had sufficient support. And there lies fully as much error in over-abstinence as in repletion. We must beware of that exhaustion of body which destroys mental energy; and I perceive that the young lady is merely able to stand; and hence a train which——”

Mrs Stanhope was forced to smile at this interminable and systematic digression. He saw the smile, but mistook the cause; and reddening, he said, “Sit down, even here, in this humble place, there are chairs enough and to spare, and there is no time like the present. I see you perceive that I think if Florence depart exhausted and inert, that there may be excited in her mind an apathetic feeling towards us. I will not deny that my mind did glance that way; and I will maintain, that to render ourselves agreeable in a fair and open manner, and to leave on her mind such an impression as will

not easily wear off, is no more than what is due to our great and good cause. But, in truth, the young lady lacks support; and she is one on whom I would not over severely inflict the penance of abstinence. And now, you see, as I said before, these poor people have not transgressed the laws of moderation; but as wine is not good in a morning, and as no one can answer for human strength, I shall remove the remainder; nor should I have deeply blamed the exhausted creatures if they had drank the whole, for one relishing mouthful leads to another in those who are not well practised in the laws of restraint; and, alas! where should they learn it, whose whole life is one continued penance, in the heretical sense,—that is, *punishment without repentance*,—for you have sadly corrupted the text.”

It required all Mrs Stanhope’s politeness to sit out, at eight o’clock in the second week of October, such perpetual ramifications; but there was so much candour in his whole air and manner, so much honest, unvarnished zeal, and the whole set off with that eager kindness, which tells more than a thousand fine speeches that rejected hospitality is the bitterest of little evils that could possibly be inflicted. Yet Florence, who could not

but feel herself a favourite, ventured to remark, that her mother was already too late out, and that, for herself, there was no occasion for farther taxing his kindness.

“Taxing!” said he. “My dear child, where did you pick up that word? or rather, why does one so ingenuous adopt what is bandied about without sense or meaning? I know not whether our intercourse may be of short or long duration, or whether this brief afternoon shall be its close; but should we, as I hope, meet again and often, let me beg of you never to refuse anything which I can give, and that it suits you to take. And now—but stop one moment, till I dispose of this wine.” So saying, he opened the door of the half-blind Irishman, and pouring out a part of the liquor, strode on to another apartment; but opening the door, he again shut it, and in a low tone said, “You will see here the worst spectacle of all. Alas! alas! did I not hint that a fair face is a snare? Here is a poor creature not eighteen, and she is the dying victim of a betrayed, a deserted, and a broken heart.” He opened the door, and a beautiful, decayed young woman was seen sitting by a fire, with a lamp and books before her. “How are you to-night, Catherine?” said he, in a kind

and melancholy tone; "I have brought two good ladies to ask for you."

She raised her once brilliant black eyes, and burst into an agony of tears. Mr Ashburn was vexed, and retreated. Florence did not feel herself the more inclined, by this incident, to do credit to his hospitality, and with difficulty forced herself to swallow a glass of wine, and to eat a small rice biscuit.

"I did wrong, very wrong," said he; "such a sight could not be agreeable to you, and to her the eye of female virtue may be like a reproach. Poor thing! at this moment the wretch who brought her to what you see is probably, indeed almost certainly (for he is of rank, young, and handsome) the admired idol of some circle in which, perhaps, this unhappy victim has no equal in point of beauty and talent. But no matter; she was of inferior rank, and therefore a lawful prize to the favourite of fortune. I have no words whereby to express my indignation at such depravity. It may be a sin,—if it is, I cannot help it,—but I have often wished that the earth would open and swallow up all the monsters in human shape who delight in blasting innocence, youth, and beauty." Mr Ashburn clasped his hands, then covered his eyes with

them, and after sitting a few moments, lighted a taper, and said, "I must see if she is composed."

"Stop," said Florence, "I am going to ask a strange favour. It is possible she may imagine that we knew her unfortunate history, and that we turned away so hastily in contempt. Pray allow me to speak with her a few minutes."

"Allow you!" said Mr Ashburn, "most gladly."

To avoid the encomium which his eyes expressed, and in fear of fresh digression, she walked off as quickly as possible. She soon returned, and it was evident she had been weeping.

"How did she take your visit?" asked Mr Ashburn.

"She was pleased, and I have left her comforted, and particularly in your kind sympathy with her sufferings; and you will like to hear that she is grateful for your kindness in an uncommon degree, and for having saved her from a sinful death. But I think, Mr Ashburn, she may recover."

"Can you wish that she should do so? And for what? To live ashamed of herself, and—be her repentance and future purity what they may,—shut out from all intercourse with the world.

Not a respectable, authorised, and well-supported seclusion, where repentance is revered and held sacred;—no, that is past in this depraved country, and she must live at once in the world and shut out from it. Horrible! I can fancy nothing more dreadful to a female who once owned uncontaminated feelings. It is to have the mark of Cain upon her. No, no; all that care, medicine, sympathy, and above all, religious comfort, can do, shall be done; but—I cannot wish her to live. You all read our poet Goldsmith; remember what he says on that touching subject. In one thing he errs, for he says, ‘What tears can wash her guilt away?’ But he is right in the close of his lines, for all that is left for such, is death, at least in a country where the past is not covered by a deep veil.”

He sunk into a reverie, and Mrs Stanhope was compelled to be patient, for who could disturb such thoughts? In a few minutes he started up, and throwing out his arms as if in the act of driving all that can trouble the mind of man far from him, he exclaimed, “It is indeed inexplicable! Oh, why is all this moral deformity? But what avail all the conjectures of men—or rather, are they not so many rebellious temptings of a

patient Creator? Let us bow the head in submission, and accept with eternal gratitude the universal bursting of these fearful chains."

It was evident that this exclamation came from a mind of the deepest thought, and from feelings of the most intense nature. He had resumed his seat, and was again abstracted; but suddenly, he said, "I have really trespassed upon your patience to a most unpardonable pitch, and I cannot but admire your politeness in thus having borne with me. And I sincerely hope, Mrs Stanhope, that yours is the politeness of the heart, not that false, hollow sort, so laboriously set forth by your noble namesake."

CHAPTER VI.

MRS STANHOPE felt chagrined at the events of the day, but they had not been under her controul; and upon the most strict investigation, as they walked on in silence, she could not see how it was possible to have avoided them. It was natural to seek shelter in such weather, and a train of delicate incidents had occurred to keep her at Mr Ashburn's later than she could possibly approve. But she glanced now and then with a little ire at the pertinacity of Florence in several instances during the evening; but again, in a mother's heart, some ready apology was to be found. Fluctuating between anger against and forgiveness of her daughter; blame and acquittal with herself, she reached the stand of coaches. A lamp shone full upon the party, and at the same time shewed them a man in a short frock, and wearing one of those little round hats which give an additional impudence

to a face fraught with that characteristic, or of stolidity to a heavy, dull one. He stopped for an instant, looked at the party, and then walked on to the next coach.

"That man," said Mrs Stanhope, as soon as they were seated, "has been close behind us ever since we came out of Mr Ashburn's, and he looked at us just now in a very insolent manner."

"He did so," replied Florence; "but I hope it was accidental."

"Why should it be otherwise?" asked Mr Ashburn.

"I don't know; but I feel glad and most thankful for your protection."

"Indeed, madam, it is but your due; for I certainly detained you too long."

"Then you think we are improperly late?"

"By no means, under safe care; but women are so timid, as you have just evinced, that after night-fall they should never be out alone."

"True," said Mrs Stanhope, while Mr Ashburn could perceive in her face strong indications of terror, and a lividness which almost bordered on death.

"My dear madam," said he, "tell me, unless my question is impertinent, if you have anything to fear? You are either ill, or under the

influence of apprehension in no common degree. Your daughter, too—but she is exhausted from fasting; I predicted as much.”

His anxiety made him pause sooner than he was wont to do; and looking steadily in Mrs Stanhope's face, he waited her reply. “I would not be impertinent or importunate, but if any pecuniary evil presses hard upon you, say the word, and unless the sum is very large, I shall relieve you; even if it is, I shall endeavour to mitigate your sufferings.”

“Oh!” said Mrs Stanhope, “I shall never be able to shew how grateful I feel for such generous kindness to a stranger. I am in no debt; but I am haunted, pursued, and watched by the demon of suspicion; and there was a keenness in that man's glance which has roused all my fears. It was no chimera which made me dread any novelty of opinion in my daughter!”

She became silent, and Mr Ashburn, pitying her perturbed state, and not knowing well what to say, followed her example for some time; but on coming near to Steel's place, he asked Mrs Stanhope if she had ever seen the person before? She replied in the negative. “Then,” said he, “I should hope that you are alarmed without cause.”

“ I may have been so in this case, but for some years I have been exposed to a system of such close and unremitting recognition, go where I will, that I never, without fear, see a person of suspicious appearance observe me attentively. May I ask the favour of you to show yourself very obviously, while I am in the act of paying the coachman, and then, re-enter the carriage and go home in it?

Mr Ashburn agreed to this, and found something to say to the coachman, while the lamps of a spacious and well-lighted court shewed him distinctly which house Mrs Stanhope entered.

CHAPTER VII.

DR CAMPIAN had deemed it safe not to return to Mr Ashburn's for the purpose of leave-taking; and his son, conscious of his own ardent desire to do so, and afraid of vexing his father, was silent on the subject, while their host was too much occupied with his poor guests, and too sanguine with respect to at least one of his opulent ones, to recollect for some time that they had departed abruptly.

The old man found himself plunged into a sea of troubles. He had narrowly watched his son, whose face but too plainly told, in all its varied expressions, how deeply he was interested in the fair aspirant. He had marked the vivacious flash of joy on seeing her; the fixed attention with which he regarded her; the look of newly-excited hope, attended by a timid and wary glance at himself, when the young lady spoke to Mr Ashburn, and avowed her motive for coming to his chapel;

and finally, his ears had been open to several deep but suppressed sighs. It is true, she seemed disposed to the Catholic creed; but what then? Might not this be a trick? What took them at first to the Catholic chapel? Her mother had avowed a reason, and one which no doubt had often led to conversion, though, as he thought, flippant in its source: but could he rely on her word? Yet could one so fair and so open-browed, so lovely and apparently so candid, be false? But she was clever, and a clever woman who has a daughter to marry, is—— “Shame on such thoughts!” said he to himself, as the blood mounted to his cheeks; “shame on such unmanly, uncharitable thoughts!”

“My dear father,” said Edmund, “you are uneasy.”

“I am, and I have cause. My life is a tissue of sinning imaginations. Edmund, *I* am guilty of that which heretics ascribe to us all; I am an idolater, and thou art my idol. Yes, Edmund, it will not conceal—you must see the fears, the suspicions which tear my heart.”

“And on my account?”

Edmund had been glad that the little incidents of driving home, of discharging the chaise, and of entering his house, had slightly diverted the

thoughts of his father; but he was resolved to be entirely explicit before he slept, and to sacrifice his heart's most ardent wishes and hopes, had they been founded on the acquaintance of years, instead of the snatched glances of a few moments, to his father's tranquillity.

After Dr Campian was seated, he made an effort to gain strength, and said, "My son, if you knew the disgraceful thoughts that have passed through my mind during the last three hours, you would despise me."

"My dear father, we are all liable to sinful thoughts—your temperament is highly irritable—that is the fault of nature, and—nay, stop me not—I know what you would say, that it is our duty to vanquish and defy nature. So it is, and who ever struggled more against it? But my conviction is, that you have carried self-infliction too far, and that by often exhausting your physical strength, you have deprived your mind of its powers, and placed it more at the mercy of the incidents of life."

"Edmund, I am no rebel against God. I submit, I hope patiently, to his dispensations."

Edmund smiled: "True, my dear father, you never uttered a murmur at the loss of five thousand pounds; and I am even persuaded,

that were I taken from you, you would submit as becomes a Christian; but, my dear father, is it less a dispensation of Providence that you were so delicately constituted as to be too much at the mercy of your own thoughts? and—pardon me—that a certain sort of suspicion has more sway over you than is consistent with your peace?”

“Only with regard to you, Edmund. Did you ever see me suspicious of Thomas or of Cecil?”

“No; because yours is not a little, base mind. I am to you, after God, the first and indeed almost sole object.”

“True, my dear son.”

“And it is for the love of God, and of my immortal soul, that your suspicions are so constantly alive. Then your generous, honest nature, condemns you for those fears and suspicions, which, though blameable, yet grow out of your very best principles.”

“Ah! Edmund, you are a flattering casuist; but, I will confess that there is a balsam in your words.”

“Well then, my beloved father, I will show you my entire candour, and that you have nothing to fear from the ‘daughters of Heth.’

But you must first grant me two favours the one, to swallow this glass of wine; and the other, to answer a question which I am about to ask."

Dr Campian swallowed the wine hastily, and then said, "Now, Edmund, you see how I wish to please you, and indeed you deserve all my love and confidence, and that is the reason why I am so angry with myself for my unworthy suspicion—but, indeed—However, put your question."

"My question is simply this—Of what do you suspect Mrs Stanhope? For I saw that your eye often rested upon her with that look which but too surely betokens a doubt of the person."

This question in one moment roused all the doctor's suspicions; his fear of being unjust fled, and he replied firmly, "I suspect her of having designs on you."

"My dear father, how should that be?"

"How should it not be? They go to a Catholic chapel; at night, one of them takes violently ill, and you, of all men, are sent for! Why you, or why me, but to make an acquaintance? All that is now plain; and when we met by accident,—for I confess that was

beyond her foresight, as I never breathed my purpose until we were in the carriage,—I say, when we met by accident, Miss has her cue, and is about to become a convert, and mamma makes an artful resistance. The thing is beyond dispute; and if you are blind to it, you are wilfully so.”

Edmund saw that his father was getting warm, and hastened to interrupt him by more than meeting him where his suspicious *were* just.

“My dear father,” said he, “I am certain that tomorrow morning you will view this matter otherwise, and I shall now lay open my whole heart, that by the sincerity of my avowal, you may judge of the sincerity of my promise. Why you have always dreaded my falling in love with a heretic, I cannot tell, for I solemnly declare, that until this day week my inclinations, or rather my thoughts, never verged that way. I saw the beautiful, sylph-like, yet well-defined figure, walk in before me; I even heard her query to her mother, as to whether they were in the right place, and her mother’s reply, by pointing to and bidding her look at the stone cross which fronts those who ap-

proach. I confess—for I will conceal nothing from you—that I watched her movements, and saw with regret that no outward sign was given. I also confess, that I wished, even with heart-beating anxiety, to see her face; but you know how strictly you trained me in that way, and it so happened, that when, in spite of a conscious violation of our rules, I essayed to look round, Mr D'Alembert always said something which seemed addressed to me in particular."

"Your own guilty conscience, Edmund—or, it may be, for he has read your face from boyhood, that he saw the renegade in your eye. Ah! that was one blot in our great namesake! Why did he turn from the right path, no matter how short the space? Doubtless, it was permitted, that we might be warned; that the weak might see how the strong could fall. Yes, it might be that D'Alembert, who knows your heart so well, saw it in your eyes."

"No, I do not think so; my own consciousness, I dare say, aided the eloquence of the pious father, for I *was* very anxious to see her, and for one moment, perhaps scarcely a moment, I caught a glimpse."

“ Ah ! Edmund, in that place ! I never—
but go on.”

“ Well, I confess further, that in the moment at which you were called upon, her image was before me. I saw her as she leant back—for she must have been ill at the time—I saw her shut eyes, her luxuriant curls, and the whole outline of her elegant countenance. Yet, believe me, I had not suffered a single wish to sully my duty to you, until I heard her say that she revered our church ; and then I will not deny that hope found a place in my breast. Nay, be not agitated ; cost me what it may, I shall sacrifice all to you.”

“ To me ! Alas ! do you not see, that in feeling it a sacrifice, you sin ?—and that sin in a Campian ! Edmund, how could, how can a heretic find a place in your heart ?”

“ Father, do you forget the weakness of humanity ? Were the thing so incredible, why have you feared it ?”

“ True ; and it may be that I have fanned the flame by my fears.”

“ No, solemnly no. When I was struck by the figure before me, I had no thought of you, nor of my faith ; when I felt first curiosity, and then regret, as to her creed, it was for her only

that I grieved. But after being seated, my curiosity took another turn, simply to see if her face were answerable to her form; and probably the more I resisted this curiosity, the more imperious it became: whereas, had I instantly indulged it—No, I am not sure of that—no matter—it was a deep, heavy sigh from her, which forced me at last to look at her.”

“A deep, heavy sigh! And for what, if not for you?”

“My dear father,” said Edmund laughing, “I have heard of mothers who imagine a plot against their darlings in every female face; but is it possible that *you* can be so——”

“Me? Ah! it is possible, Edmund, and all reasoning on the subject is vain. I cannot help myself in this respect, and I begin to think that I have now a sort of hideous pleasure in my fears. I suspect they have become a part of me, and I find a kind of base food for my mind in tracing through all the windings of suspicion the imaginary or real cause of my apprehensions. And as a proof of this, which never struck me before, I have never confessed the fear itself, but the occasional injustice of which it has been the cause.”

“Let me conjure you, then, to do justice to your noble nature; for it is only a noble mind which would have thus confessed.”

“No, it is the confirmed habit of a noble religion, you should say.”

“Well, then, be it so; and do that religion justice, by believing that the son who has been carefully trained *in* it, and *for* it, will never disgrace his faith, nor disturb the peace of his father.”

Dr Campian pressed his son's hand, and wept over it. Edmund gave him time to recover, and then said, “I trust now you are satisfied, and that you will not distress yourself, nor afflict me, by any further mistrust.”

“I should be base if I did. No, Edmund, I never knew you deceive me: even when a child, your feet seemed too slow for the haste you were in, when you had a fault to confess.”

“You have often comforted me by that assurance; and now let me retire.”

“Yes;” said his father pensively—“Yes—but that sigh, Edmund—just that sigh!—Now do not despise me, when I confess that my heart beats as I think of it. Why should a

lovely girl of sixteen sigh but for love? Tell me that, Edmund."

"For five hundred causes besides love. Did you not see that her mother has some hidden cause of grief?"

"Yes, I saw that in our first interview, and it was that which—But go on."

"Then you must have seen that she is devoted to her mother. Did you not remark how, in the midst of blushes, she rose up to vindicate her? But setting that aside, did you not remark—I am sure you did—her eager look as she listened to Mr Ashburn after she had again overcome her timidity, and told why she came?"

"You have noted well, Edmund."

"Could I do otherwise, had even an ordinary, uninteresting person been the querist in so sacred a cause?"

"No; you are right. I again see my own turpitude, for so bent was my whole mind on you, as the leading object of all I saw and heard, that I forgot the claims of an immortal soul. O! Edmund, I am a fearful sinner—a suspicious wretch!"

Edmund was so used to the conflicts of his

father's tender conscience, and to the modes of soothing him, that instead of entering into further particulars, he produced one or two books of devotion, and sending his thoughts from earth to heaven, created in him a sort of beatific tranquillity.

CHAPTER VIII.

MRS STANHOPE'S agitation and anxiety were not much less than those of her new acquaintances, but from very different causes. Having acted as she thought right, in case of any spy upon her, by sending back Mr Ashburn without suffering him to enter her house, she banished the momentary cause of alarm from her mind, as a circumstance which she could not possibly counteract even if the man should have been appointed to watch over her; but it was not so with respect to her daughter. She knew that a leading feature in her character was what we term pertinacity when the object in view does not seem of sufficient importance to the looker-on, and fortitude or firmness when it does. Now the object which at present occupied her daughter's mind did not seem sufficiently important, unless as the faith in which she had been bred. What was the Roman

Catholic religion to her? Why should it be anything? Or rather, why, since she had happily been bred free from its errors, should she seek to plunge into them? She was too liberal to doubt the salvation of a Catholic, or perhaps of any one, and hence her indifference, as formerly stated, in matters of religion. “What more then,” thought she, “can this be to Florence than a mere matter of taste? It is true, there was a spirit-stirring, an exciting energy, in Mr D’Alembert, which she had never met with before, especially coupled as it was with an authority which seemed to say, ‘I am direct from God.’ She paused as this consideration pressed upon her; but she threw the idea from her with,—“And has God then deserted all other Christians?”

While considering what cool prudence demanded of her, she was startled by a low single knock at the front door, as of one who wished to be admitted very quietly. The recollection of the man was instantly recalled, and both mother and daughter sat waiting the result in silent fear. The knock had not been observed at first by the servants; it was repeated in the same stealthy way; and while Mrs Stanhope sat irresolute whether to forbid admission, the

waiting-maid ushered in a person wrapped in a long dark-blue travelling cloak, wearing a corresponding cap with a gold band and tassel, and strapped under the chin; black bushy hair, with whiskers and mustaches of the same colour, and treading heavily in a pair of brass-shod Wellington boots. Mrs Stanhope's first sensation was a kind of self-gratulation that this was not the bold, forward-looking man, in the small round hat; but her next was terror, lest this person, whoever he might be, should have been seen by the other, if, indeed, that other had any mission with respect to her. She stood in breathless suspense—her guest continued silent for a minute or two, and at last burst into a hearty laugh, saying, "Is it possible you don't know me?"

"Good heaven," said Mrs Stanhope, "why have you come at such an hour, and in such a dress? It is probable you have ruined me!"

"It is not late—only nine o'clock—and as for my dress, excepting the whiskers and mustachios, it is what I often travel in. But what is the matter? Are you really offended?"

"I am more than offended, Georgina, I am shocked, both because, knowing my dislike to all trick, any practised upon me is an insult, and be-

cause I know not in what this coarse, unfeminine joke may have involved me. Good God! at a moment when I feared being seen with an elderly clergyman, you come to my house disguised like a hussar! O! Georgina, was this like a sister? My very servants——”

“ I shall soon settle that,” said the undaunted Georgina; and ringing, desired the servant to assist her in unrobing; and applying her fingers to her face, restored it to its wonted smoothness, and then, with perfect composure, told the servant, that in case of robbers she always disguised herself when travelling through a lonely country, such as that she had passed within the last two hours.

The girl looked astonished at the change which had taken place, but far more so, when, unbuckling the leather strap, and putting off her cap and wig, she displayed a head of glossy, luxuriant, dark-brown or nearly black ringlets.

“ Strange!” said the servant; “ are you really a lady? I am sure I would have given my bible oath that you was a gentleman-soldier.”

This remark increased the melancholy of Mrs Stanhope, who did not even attempt to rally her spirits, or to give a welcome to her sister.

“ This is a cold reception, sister,” said Geor-

gina: "Is it possible that a mere jest can give you such serious offence?"

"It is not the jest, Georgina; it is the levity it springs from, and the serious mischief of which it may be productive, that shock me. But the deed is done, and I must bear the results, whatever they are; and in the mean time, shall endeavour to think no more of it. Florence, get tea or coffee for your aunt, and then look after her apartment."

"Don't stir; I have been at the inn for two hours, and drank tea; I hate to spoil the pleasure of an arrival by sending the mistress or young ladies of the house to look after viands."

"Two hours! I thought you said to my servant that you had travelled for the last two hours."

"Lord, sister, are you still so literal? Who, to look at you, would expect such old-fashioned notions. I said so, just to do away my whiskers and mustachios to your servant; but I put them on for a mere frolic."

Mrs Stanhope rose in disgust, and was about to leave the room, when her sister threw her arms round her neck, assuring her that notwithstanding her follies, she had a true and a kind heart. "Come, my dear Susan," said she, "let

us be friends.: I have come a great many miles to see you, and, with all my giddiness, I can perceive, and I do so with deep regret, that you are annoyed by some new trouble, or else your old ones stirred up again. Don't let this joke shake your confidence in my regard, whatever else I may lose."

"This is beyond a joke, Georgina; but we shall say no more of it. Tell me when you left London."

"A week ago."

"A week to travel two hundred miles!"

"Yes, I am never so happy as on a journey, and I prolong the pleasure of it as much as possible."

"I need not ask if you came in a public vehicle, unless your taste is much changed."

"Not in the least: I still like the changes and chances of a mail-coach; if the company is vulgar or not amusing, it is easy to stop at the first stage; and—no disparagement to your hospitality—but I am never so entirely happy as in an inn; for there everybody strives to serve you, and nobody finds fault."

"Where is your luggage?"

"At the hotel: it comes in the morning. I hate the bustle of trunks and bandboxes, when

one should be embracing and indulging in all the —— I don't know what you sentimentalists would call it."

Mrs Stanhope could not help smiling at the oddness of a person so well understanding all the practical part of what she could not have defined in words; and endeavoured to forget her little peccadilloes in the recollection of her real worth, if that deserved the name which sprung merely from animal kindness, and was not supported by any systematic principle. Willing to talk of something in her own style, she laughed at the load of rings which adorned her somewhat large but very handsome fingers.

"O! yes," said she, "they are horrid things to wear; but they give consequence, and their designs, and mottos, and settings, afford conversation sometimes; besides, I like to create surprise, by hinting that I got this from a general, that from an admiral, and another from a duchess. I have a brooch and drops to match that little myrtle in mosaic which the Duchess of D—— gave me."

"The Duchess of D——!" said Mrs Stanhope; I remember your buying it last time I was in London."

"To be sure, it is the same; I am merely

letting you hear a little puff, just to give one an air of importance."

Mrs Stanhope took up the candle, and left the room without uttering a single word; Florence, who had been examining the rings, threw them from her in disgust; and her aunt indulged herself in a flood of tears, probably more angry than repentant. Florence, however, attended to her aunt's comforts for the night, and then took a cold leave of her.

Miss Fortescue, who was really attached to her sister, rose next morning rather out of spirits, but trusting to external circumstances for being restored to favour, she hastened to the hotel, and had her luggage removed before breakfast; and as soon as her sister and niece made their appearance, she presented the first with a choice collection of perfumes, almond powder, and some of the finest soap which London could produce; and the other with a complete winter walking-dress, made in the very first style of taste and fashion.

Solomon says, "a gift destroyeth the heart;" certainly it is a serious stumbling-block in the way of a severe and rigid disapprobation of what is wrong in the donor, unless in such decided cases as betoken a bribe. What could Mrs

Stanhope do, but receive the presents with a countenance somewhat relaxed? and probably she again adverted in her own mind to her sister's genuine kindness, and sought a palliative in an easy, careless disposition, which led her to err merely from want of thought. But with all her thoughtlessness, she was not ignorant of those other modes usually had recourse to by little minds. "She had an excellent appetite this morning, and even in the best inns she had seen no such bread, better butter, or more transparent coffee." And then, still on the look-out for external matters, she recollected an impudent-looking man, who was standing at the outer verge of the court, and who sauntered after her as she went to the inn, and she imagined eyed her very attentively when there. This information drew forth an account of Mrs Stanhope's alarm on the preceding evening, when Georgina entered warmly into her sister's apprehensions.

"I shall go out again," said she, "and if I see him as evidently loitering about as he was this morning, I shall ask him what he means, and intimidate him by threatening to bring a brother to our protection."

"And where is this brother?"

“ In my own imagination; and surely you will not deny that a threat to save us from trouble, and maybe dishonour in some shape, is justifiable.”

“ Certainly, if grounded in truth.”

“ Upon my word, Susan, one would think you had lived all your life with a Methodist priest, and nobody could guess that you are watched and hunted down upon the suspicion of being gay.”

“ And you would have me become really vicious, in order to protect me against the charge! And would your threat do any good? If this man is watching me, he would know that you are telling a falsehood, and have at least one cause for reproach?”

“ Sister,” said Georgina, “ I excused you last night, because I know your strange old-fashioned notions; but I must really laugh at you for hesitating to save yourself at the expense of so slight a deviation from truth.”

“ Upon the same principle you may justify stealing: ‘ I’m in want of an article, and it will not greatly injure my neighbour if I take this trifle from him.’ ”

“ That is quite different: you there actually commit a fraud, which you can be punished for;

but as there is no punishment in the other case, it is a proof that it is a fault of very little importance."

"It is a fraud as much as the other; it is a fraud upon the faith of the person lied to."

"Tell me in one word, sister, whether you would be annoyed by this man's presence, by his perpetual watch over you, by his impertinent look every time you go out; or get quit of him at once, by saying that you would send for a brother to horsewhip him?"

"Did you ever read any of Miss Edgeworth's tales or novels?"

"Never."

"Because, if you had, you might have seen a remark which she makes, in one of her tales I think, that '*all vice is weakness*.' Nothing can be more true. Pride is weakness; false ambition is weakness; theft, murder, every crime under heaven, have their source in weakness. But I can scarcely conceive anything so weak as to endeavour at defending your sister by a falsehood, which the person to whom it is told must know to be so; since you may depend upon it, if he is sent to be a spy upon me, he knows what relations I have. But that is not the reason why I would avoid the thing; it is

because of all vices lying is most genuinely the offspring of a weak mind; and consequently, if you yield in that point, it is impossible to tell what other crimes may follow in its train."

Miss Fortescue bowed.

"I am sorry, Georgina, to seem severe or unkind, but I must speak out in duty to my daughter, setting you and myself entirely aside. She must not hear the slightest sanction *to*, the slightest acquiescence *in*, a falsehood."

"Then she must never live in the world. I have heard more clergymen than one justify lies,—aye, clergymen of our own church. I heard Mr Hudson say, before his own children, that there were many cases in which it was a duty to tell a lie; and he said that a great man, I don't remember his name, but he wrote on Christianity, has justified lying."

"Yes, I have heard it said that Paley excuses falsehood in some instances; making the distinction, I suppose, between *needless* lying and *necessary* (as he would say) that people make between wilful *murder* and *killing* in self-defence. But it is a wretched doctrine, and calculated to sap and overthrow the surest foundation of all virtue,—*spotless, unstained truth*. I can easily believe what you say in respect to

a clergyman, for I heard a Scotch minister (and they are reckoned very strict) confess that he had told many lies. And I have heard that a gentleman, who gave up his best and dearest interests in life, on account of some sectarian whims, asserted to a near relation of his own, that there were business-lies altogether unavoidable! But you may rely upon this, Georgina, that the man or woman who has but said 'yes' when he should say 'no,' or 'no' when he should say 'yes,' has cast the first stain upon his own white robes. Georgina, did you ever walk out in a very dirty day?"

"Often."

"Did you ever remark, that so long as your nice clean white petticoat remained without a spot, you continued vigilant and cautious as to every step, but the instant you were conscious that it had suffered, you became less careful?"

This reasoning was quite level to Georgina's capacity, and she was forced to smile.

"I have often," continued Mrs Stanhope, "been very forcibly struck by this simple analogy. It is just so with the mind. While it remains pure and unsullied, especially as to truth, you have pleasure in preserving it so; but one slip—

one false step—it is no longer clean, and you splash on without regret, far less remorse.”

“It may be so,” said Georgina with perfect indifference, “to those who can *recollect* being in that spotless state: I make no such pretensions, and must go on in my own way. I am just as good in that respect as other people; and I injure no one by what you call my lies.”

“You are sadly mistaken. If you have at all understood me, and I was homely enough, you must be sensible that you injure your own mind by destroying its purity; and as all lies are detected sooner or later, you injure your nearest and dearest relations by reflecting disgrace on them.”

CHAPTER IX.

MR ASHBURN awoke on the second Monday of October with a set of confused notions. He recollected that he had been at one and the same time pleased and vexed; but the cause was so new, and so little mingled with his usual thoughts and familiar objects of interest, that he could not immediately remember the subject which on falling asleep had been nearest his heart. He thought of the old man and his family, as of usual inmates; the younger couple and their children were such people as he picked up daily, and their situation so common, that it was impossible it could have given intense pain, or their relief great pleasure; the dying young woman—to think of her brought an unmixed and bitter pang. O! but it *was* a young woman. Yes, the beautiful Florence; she seemed powerfully drawn towards the good cause; but her mother was adverse to it. Was

it a duty to weaken her allegiance to a parent? "I know," thought he, "that the soul's salvation is chief over all other considerations. For this cause should a man leave all, and seek only the path through which he may be conducted himself, or conduct others, to everlasting life. Yes, I will up and be doing. I shall see her this day; I will not indeed violently interfere between parent and child, but I will advise what no reasonable creature can object to, that the lady shall be indulged in her most reasonable wish of knowing the actual truth. Nay, it is no more than an act of very common justice to ourselves. So saying, he dressed with alacrity, and after having seen that his inmates were entirely independent of the careful and reluctant Alice, he hastened to Steel's place.

Breakfast was nearly over. Georgina had retired in anger, and almost resolved to leave her sister's house that day. She had been accused of falsehood, for nothing more than sporting a joke, or harmless boast, respecting a ring; and when apparently forgiven on this account, or perhaps suffered, as one does a hopeless child, a fresh attack is opened, because by a falsehood, which she knew the Rev. Mr Hudson would justify upon the authority of Paley, she

meant to secure her sister from insult. Her presents had been pushed aside, and she could observe were retained in mere courtesy. "What sister could put up with such treatment! And what woman, who knew anything of polite life, would hesitate to tell a hundred such lies? Were not all the civilities of life carried on by little harmless falsehoods, which everybody knew to be such? Was not the perpetual winking at all those things a continual lie? Assuredly." Thus bolstered up, Georgina hastily threw in the few articles which she had taken out of a large trunk, locked it indignantly, pulled her bell, and went so far as to say, "Send for a porter." But nature assumed her sway, and relenting from her purpose, she added, "O! no, I am mistaken. I thought I had left one of my trunks at the hotel, but I see I have them all." The maid being at that moment summoned by Mr Ashburn's knock, left Miss Fortescue reflecting upon the advantage she possessed over her sister, who could have found no way of extricating herself, and would probably either have left the house in wrath, or confided in a servant rather than make a small evasion.

Is it wonderful that the disciples of Godwin should say, "Morality is yet in its infancy?"

And will you establish the position upon the derelictions of a foolish, giddy, fashionable young woman? „No, we will not; we establish it upon all we see; upon the *whole* system of that society in which Miss Fortescue learnt to ridicule, as old-fashioned and puritanic, the love of truth.

Mr Ashburn had not been pleased with Mrs Stanhope, but it was impossible to think of her with resentment. Hers was a face and form which none could look upon without a softened feeling, excepting those in whom there lurked some peculiar, personal, or selfish motive for hatred. She was in fact exactly what the senior Dr Campian had described her, a figure beautifully defined, set off by the graces of nature and cultivation, but chiefly the former; and a face, in which it was almost impossible to say that one feature surpassed another. But it was the singular softness of her blue eyes, and an expression of tenderness about the corners of her mouth, which (as far as our experience goes) was entirely peculiar to herself, that pleased the vulgar without knowing why, and created in the refined an interest and melancholy altogether inexplicable. How long silken eye-lashes, soft humid eyes, and lips that betokened an acute and

trembling sensibility, could belong to a person of stern morality, we never could comprehend; but so it was.

However, it was enough to Mr Ashburn, that before parting he had discovered her to be in distress. That circumstance alone had banished all resentment for the hostility she had shown to her daughter's wishes, and to his own of extending to her his pastoral hand. He entered therefore with a heart not less softened towards the mother than it yearned with holy paternity towards the daughter. "I am an early visitor," said he, "but I have many calls upon me in the afterpart of the day, and — But why seek for an apology? In short, I could not have felt at peace had I not enquired for you both, as I was considerably pained last night, Mrs Stanhope, on account of the sudden uneasiness to which you seemed exposed, either from a real or imaginary cause. It indeed matters little, as to mental pain, whether the cause be actually in existence, or only in our own thoughts, springing from a deranged state of the nervous system, or in whatever source it pleases God to place the subject of trial. For in reality, Mrs Stanhope, we ought to view all that passes as merely so many occurrences which

have a reference to the ultimate end of our progress in and through life. Therefore, you have earnestly my sympathy, whether this person is actually sent for your annoyance, or imagined to be so; seeing, that unless you have sufficient strength of mind,—and which is attainable only in that conviction of your own weakness, which will lead you to seek divine aid, so that you may throw off this distressing imagination,—you are as much its slave as if the man were placed over you as a perpetual spy. For you, Florence, I have felt another care. It is for you, at this early stage of existence, to fortify your mind in such a manner, as (always with reference to other aid than human) to defy equally chimeras and realities. And it seems to me that you have in you the first important impulses towards that rock which you will find the only sure defence against the evils of life. But remember, I hold you subordinate, as far as I am concerned, to your parent, and all I can do is, to pray most fervently that she may see the justice of allowing your mind to have free scope in a matter which is chief over all others.”

As we have said before, there was a singular earnestness in the manner of Mr Ashburn, and it was tenfold more impressive on account of

his entire abstractedness from himself, and an apparent unconsciousness of being able to produce any effect on his auditors, which did not flow directly, and without the aid of human eloquence, from the exalted nature of his subject. The very depth of his feeling, which often in conversation bordered on passion, seemed to carry him out of himself; as if the pure interest he took in the object of concern robbed him of all personality, and concentrated his whole capabilities in whatever he had in view. But it was only in colloquial intercourse that he produced the effect alluded to; for he was so convinced of his want of oratorical powers, that when confronting a large congregation, and feeling himself called upon to be at least forceful, his natural energy was in a great measure rendered null; and perhaps it was for this reason, that in the pulpit he chiefly confined himself to dry proofs of doctrinal points, and of the church's universality. There was nothing new in what he had said, for the same words would have issued from the mouth of any orthodox Protestant who wished to fortify a youthful mind; but there was that in his manner which awed Mrs Stanhope, notwithstanding her prejudice against his creed, and her fear of any tampering with her daughter.

He was not slow to construe her silence into an assent, and grasping her arm in his eager way, he added, "I trust my prayer has been heard, and I thank God for his infinite mercy!"

Now was the moment for Mrs Stanhope to have declared boldly that she could not consent to her daughter seeking any knowledge on a subject to which she could be of no importance; but she recollected what he had already said in opposition to that opinion; and besides, the kindness of her nature, nay, politeness itself, forbade a violent and decisive hostility to his pious wish. She therefore continued silent, and Mr Ashburn, quitting her arm, drew his chair slightly out of the line, and taking an erect position, seemed to breathe freely in the delightful prospect before him of emancipating a young, lovely, and virtuous maiden from the deadly thralldom of heresy. If his earnestness had arrested the faculties of Mrs Stanhope, his glowing satisfaction restored them, and she saw in an instant all the danger to which her daughter was exposed. This man of fervent zeal would leave no effort unessayed to second the wishes of Florence; and besides, she had heard frightful stories of Catholics compassing sea and land in order to make a single convert. Those, she

had learnt, were chiefly Jesuits. Mr Ashburn was not of that order, but he had bowed his head at the name of D'Alembert, who was. "I must be decided," thought she; "my daughter's fortune, her faith, my peace, hang on a word." She rallied her courage; but just when she was about to speak, she recollected his kind offer of last night, and her resolution sunk; an instant however sufficed to show the turpitude of this feeling, and engaged as her thoughts were, she had time to pity those who are in the shackles of real dependence. "But it was indeed base in me," she thought, "to sacrifice mental freedom upon the altar of politeness and mere worldly gratitude."

Yet what could she say? To express great fear of Florence hearing his cause, was to argue *her* very weak, *it* very strong, or, its advocates very insidious. He was too much occupied with his own thoughts to attend to the fluctuations of mind which were portrayed in the face of Mrs Stanhope; and while he first indulged himself in the delightful vision of opening up a way to heaven to the beautiful aspirant, and next considered who was to undertake the work, Mrs Stanhope was making a fresh effort to negative the whole.

“I am well aware,” said she at last, “that you, Mr Ashburn, are actuated by the purest and most disinterested motives; but listen to me, and then say candidly if you do not think it wise to give up indulging my daughter in an investigation which really cannot be of importance to her. Excuse me—I see you are displeased; but indeed, my dear sir, you must permit me in this matter to use the same freedom of speech which you will demand, if I consent to the discussion. I must therefore say, that viewing the subject, as I do, and as thousands do, it seems to me a superfluous investigation on the part of my daughter.”

“Then you will not permit her to judge for herself? You will not permit her to take an impartial view of that fabric which was founded on a rock, and which contains at this moment within its venerable precincts ten to one of those who would pull it to the ground?”

“First hear my history, if you have an hour to spare, and if, after that, you say that she should—I must say it, however offensive—run the risk of having her religious opinions changed, I shall submit.”

“I ask no more,” said he, looking at his

watch ; “ I shall spare you three hours, instead of one.”

“ First,” said Florence, “ tell me how the poor young woman is ?”

“ Better, considerably, this morning. Your visit soothed and tranquillized her much. O ! if those who have sailed smoothly down the stream of life knew how much is in their power—how much more they can achieve than even the good Samaritan, who merely healed the wounds of the body—they would forget the haunts of folly—I do not mean to impugn you, I speak in general;—they would forego the morning saloon, the mid-day promenade, the evening mask, and the whole round of dizzying amusements; and seek out the broken in spirit, the poor deluded creatures, who have erred more, only because more tempted. But I may not enter on that subject; it is one which always sinks me into an abyss of woe—Go on, madam; I am all attention.”

“ You wondered, Mr Ashburn, at the fear which I exhibited last night, but when you hear how I am circumstanced, you will at least excuse me. I am the daughter of a Mr Fortescue, to whom I was for ten years considered as sole

heiress to a property of about a thousand a-year; but at the end of that period, my mother presented my father with another daughter. Almost immediately after that event, my father died; and, as perhaps would have happened in nine cases out of ten, my mother's chief attention devolved on my sister. She might nearly be termed the child of her old age, and she very naturally imagined, that in her, rather than in me, she saw the representative of my father; and certainly, as far as appearance went, she saw his representative, and perhaps it was owing to that circumstance, and my mother taking pleasure in calling her George, that she cultivated in herself a masculine turn, at least in a few particulars."

"She is a woman of talent, then," said Mr Ashburn.

Mrs Stanhope blushed, hesitated, and then said, "She has very good abilities, but they were not properly cultivated; at least I think so; for what one person deems a good education, another holds utterly repugnant to common sense. The masculine turn to which I allude, consists in having great delight in field sports, in angling, in riding on horseback, in taking long journeys alone in public vehicles, and in

sometimes dressing in as masculine a manner as she possibly can. Were I certain that you will never meet her, I might conceal what I hold the most reprehensible part of the list, but you cannot see her without discovering a kind of Bond-street boasting, and an affectation of a hardness of heart, which is indeed fashionable, but which she does not in reality possess."

"That is bad, very bad,—even worse than if her heart were really hard. To affect anything is a practical lie, and by long practice those faults may be superinduced and become a part of us, which were naturally foreign to our disposition."

"I am giving you too serious a view of her character, and can scarcely tell why."

"I know why," said Florence; "my mother respects you too much, to feel it a matter of indifference that you should imagine that part of her character in the slightest degree sanctioned by her."

"You are a pretty pleader, Florence, and I esteem you for the care which you always take to place your mother in a proper light. By a pretty pleader, I mean one who argues in a neat, polite manner; I speak not of the bauble beauty, though, to say truth, it is a very influential thing.

But go on, madam, and pray give me an instance of Bond-street boasting, and what you call *fashionable* hardness of heart."

"I cannot well do the first; but if you ever read Miss Edgeworth's 'Dun,' you will very easily comprehend what I mean by the last."

"I read all she writes; she is my country-woman, an able asserter of her country's rights, and as somebody says—Jeffery, I think—she has done more for Britain than any other writer of the age. Look at her system of juvenile training! all other systems vanish into thin air before it. She is the first of man or woman who has taught us, what is surely plain enough, that a child is a creature endowed with a soul, and should be treated like a reasoning, accountable being. But alas!"—and drawing a deep breath, he seized Mrs Stanhope's arm, as was his practice when much in earnest,—“alas! notwithstanding all that she has done, she has left out of her system that soul's especial interest. Yes! there is no end of human discrepancies, when an infallible, uncontrovertible guide is set at nought. Woe's me! look around on the wreck which this freedom of thought has created. Even Miss Edgeworth's wisdom has not been proof against the desolating influence of what is called *free* re-

search. But it was of what the world deems her lighter works of which you spoke, though to my mind it is more easy to write a system of education than a tale. I would therefore say, the works which seem lighter, but which, in fact, require all the skill and perspicuity of human intellect. First, the penetration to see all the windings of that tenuous, flexible, yet stubborn thing, the human mind; and then to turn all that to account, so as to produce an intellectual moral picture. Upon the whole, I am not sure—always considering the end in view—if a fable, a fiction, a tale, or, as they are termed, novels, when well executed, are not the most perfect achievement of the human understanding. But you spoke of the ‘Dun:’ I remember it most especially, for I gnashed my teeth as I had spread before me, as on a map, the victims of fashionable levity,—if it indeed can be called by so gentle a name:—rather should I say, of fashionable swindling.”

“Well, then, my example will tell you at once what I mean. My sister is an excellent economist, and never exceeded her income in her life, or by any chance ran short of money; but I have known her withhold payments, merely that she might resemble the fashionable world,

who, to do them justice, generally withhold because their folly has left them without the means; and when I forced her to listen to the story of the ‘Dun,’ she affected to laugh at what is, perhaps, one of the most heart-touching incidents in print, ‘powdering a dun.’”

“Marvellous! and does the creature exist that can smile at that most affecting picture? I remember, when I read that passage, I laid down the book in wrath. I believe I was angry because the author had so much disturbed my feelings—‘This is what I call powdering a dun,’ said the poor thoughtless creator of interminable misery,—of nakedness, hunger,—nay, perhaps of capital crimes. Horrible! I could not look with kindness, with toleration, on the man or woman who could laugh at such a picture. I think I see the dismayed child who was to return empty-handed to his father and mother, who, with beating hearts and parched lips, waited his arrival.”

Mr Ashburn groaned, covered his eyes and remained silent.

“I grieve,” said Mrs Stanhope, “that I told you this, and even the apology of Florence is insufficient. Believe me, she has a kind heart, and ——”

Mr Ashburn waved his hand in token of a wish that she would be silent; and Mrs Stanhope could find no excuse for herself, though in fact her daughter had hit upon the true cause of her openness. At that moment, Georgina made her appearance, and being abashed by the superior virtue of her sister, and some little sense of shame, she entered with downcast eyes and a timid air; and knowing Mrs Stanhope's dislike to the general style of her dress, she had, by way of being very feminine, thrown a rich veil over her fine dark hair, and then tucked it up at one side, in such a manner as to give her a half nun-like appearance. Mrs Stanhope, who was accustomed to her various freaks, could not help smiling, on seeing so strange a contrast to last night's exhibition. Georgina saw the smile, and piqued to farther sentimentality, proceeded to a seat with downcast eyes and demure pace. Mr Ashburn instinctively rose, walked forward, and then retreated, as conscious of being un-introduced. Mrs Stanhope was too much offended to temporise, and maintaining a proud silence, left Georgina to make her own way; and she saw that, although Mr Ashburn was turned of fifty, somewhat corpulent, with a round, sanguine countenance, light projecting eyes, but

strongly expressive of his ardent character, still his admiration or wonderment was better than none. Georgina pulled off her glove, and finding occasion to put her ringlets farther back, displayed her elegant hand so employed, and now stripped of its rings, to the best advantage.

It is probable that the actual purity of Mr Ashburn's mind kept pace with his rigid and fit observance of his vows; and we have little doubt, that, like some of his order, he would have deemed penance due for even the errors of his sleeping thoughts; but he had a quick and acute perception of beauty, and a proportionate admiration. Indeed, no man ever existed, of whom it might more truly be said, that his mind continually reverted from nature to nature's God. "Love the Lord thy God with all thy might and with all thy strength," was exemplified in him to what might be called the acme of human devotion; and whatever he looked upon that was lovely, he admired chiefly on account of its affording a beautiful testimony of God's creative power. As he gazed upon Georgina, he thought he had never seen eyes so brilliant (for all her coquetry and shading could not quench their fire) hair so black, glossy, and luxuriant, or a complexion so richly contrasted. He

again rose, and again set down; looked at Florence and her mother, and probably felt them blanched in his eyes. "A friend of yours?" said he to Mrs Stanhope.

"I hope so," was the cold, laconic answer.

Just then, Georgina felt herself incommoded by the heat of the fire, and rising to place a skreen before her, displayed a figure much more regular than her face. Her stature was exactly five feet nine; her shoulders broad; her bust full; her waist almost too small; but this defect was probably aggravated, especially in the eye of ladies, by the statue-like contrast of the other parts of her form. Her well-proportioned feet and ancles were adorned in the Diana style, and her drapery was just short enough to let them be seen without materially deducting from the dignity of her figure.

Mr Ashburn whispered to Mrs Stanhope, "An extraordinary fine woman! Pray, what is her name?"

"Fortescue."

"Fortescue! I have heard the name, I think!"

Mrs Stanhope could not help smiling, for it was not half an hour since she had told him that it had formerly been her own.

“Pray, Miss Fortescue,” said he, “will you sit here? You will be less incommoded by the fire.”

Seating herself beside him, and resolved to keep the attention she had gained, she withdrew her watch from her side, and addressing Mr Ashburn, she asked, where she could find a skilful artist, for her repeater had ceased to strike, and being a valuable trinket, she was anxious to have it properly repaired.

He took the toy from her hand, examined its rich embossings, its fine classic designs, and the gems by which it was ornamented, and then fixing his eyes on her countenance, he said, “It is doubtless very beautiful. The gold has been fined, the diamond has been polished, and the skill of the cunning artificer is displayed; but what is it all, compared with the sparkling eye and the glowing tint of the human face? No—” and he dropped the watch into her lap—“no—man’s best works are poor indeed, compared with such specimens of divine skill as we meet with every day. What would you remark?” said he,—for at the close of his speech he had sought Mrs Stanhope’s eye—“What would you remark? There, now, is a beautiful, a living, speaking, yet

dumb proof of divine art! What human hand could make that eye,—tell me,—that a doubting or objecting rejoinder hovers on your tongue?”

Mrs Stanhope could not repress a smile, bordering on a laugh; but he was pleased—for who is not?—at producing a strong effect on an intelligent mind, even though its nature should be somewhat dubious.

“ I was going to remark,” said she, “ and remember I do it with profound respect for you, and awe of the subject, that I think there is something erroneous in that mode of praising and adoring God. We take from his divine attributes by such wonder; and if you will throw your thoughts into another channel, you must acknowledge, that it is the works of man that we should wonder at, not those of God. I perceive that there is in you a deep, an habitual, and solemn love of the Deity; but I have seldom in any one else heard the species of admiration you have just expressed, without having the idea of mere unmeaning words conveyed to my ears. Let us look up to the Deity in the power that he has given to man; but let us not degrade the divine power by wondering at its achievements.”

Mr Ashburn in an instant forgot the jetty hair, the sparkling eye, the lily and the rose; and turning his back upon the dark-haired beauty, looked at Mrs Stanhope as if he would have devoured her words; and after acknowledging that there was both truth and novelty in what she had uttered, he entered into a long and deep conversation with her, forgetting at once the dazzling specimen of divine skill which had called it forth, the immediate object of his visit, and the history of the fair and unconscious metaphysician.

Georgina listened, or at least sat for a short time; but finding she could not participate, nor recall the attention of Mr Ashburn, she withdrew to look over her trinkets and her wardrobe. At the end of two hours, Mr Ashburn recollected the purpose for which he had come, and at the same time a visit to a sick person, but intimated his intention of returning at an early hour next day. He went away highly impressed in favour of Mrs Stanhope's intellectual endowments, and not without a slight fear as to the difficulty which might be found in surmounting the scruples of one who seemed to think it very immaterial in what faith an individual was born, but important, for the love of

both public and domestic peace, that he should continue in it.

He did not fail to keep his appointment, and finding the ladies assembled, after paying his respects to the group, he said, "Now, Mrs Stanhope, I have just two hours to spare, and I will not delay our intended conference, nor wander from the main subject as I did yesterday. I reproached myself much. The present hour only is ours, and I was guilty of great self-indulgence, in being drawn aside by your conversation, which, though it tended to edification in some measure, yet contained not the true vital sort. Is this lady in your confidence?"

"Entirely so; but——Georgina, you are not fond of discussion, and I will not tax your patience, if you would rather go to the drawing-room. Besides, as I told you, it is necessary for an object in view, that I should make this gentleman acquainted with my little history; and——"

"O! for heaven's sake, no more. I hate histories of all sorts; so, good bye."

"I think," said Mr Ashburn, "you called that lady Georgina, and that brings to my recollection what you said of your sister; surely that is not the same?"

“ It is, indeed; and I shall be sorry if anything I have said should produce an effect upon your mind of a prejudicial nature to her.”

Mr Ashburn walked two or three times across the room in silence, but at last said with something like a groan, “ And so beautiful! So much the worse! I look upon the gift of external beauty as a draft upon the internal capacities. Well, well; we cannot help it! and I believe that religion itself could not possibly reach the heart of that man or woman, especially woman,—for being of a softer texture, we startle the more at her enormities—I say, religion itself could not reach the heart of the man or woman who could laugh at ‘ powdering a dun.’ But, pray resume your history, and if I see your sister again, I shall endeavour to look upon her as I would on a fair but fragile building. I see you are vexed; but you did right; for, as Florence said, you must have suffered in my esteem,—and you have done me the honour to think it worth possessing,—if I could have supposed that you gave your sanction to the levity which I am sure, sooner or later, must appear in one who can laugh at even imaginary evils.”

He paused; and Mrs Stanhope, no way comforted by his reasoning, hastened to get quit of

the subject. "I think I mentioned," said she, "that it was natural in my mother to have her attention greatly attracted towards the infant which had come so late, and seemed, as she often remarked, to have been sent in order to fill up the void left in her heart by the death of my father. At first I was charmed with the lovely infant; but when the novelty wore off, I had reason to feel, that if the void in my mother's heart was filled, in mine it was every day enlarging. My father had a settled dislike to all schools for girls, and was even jealous of hired teachers; and he therefore took upon himself the task of teaching me to read and write at an early period; and before his death I was a tolerable French and Italian scholar. My mother was always averse to this, alleging that the time spent on me abridged his field-sports, and might injure his health. But he never desisted, and became so fond of the task, that he at last relinquished his former pursuits, contenting himself with stated rides, and such walks as my mother and I could take with him. I cannot tell the reason, but I recollect when he was unusually pleased with what he thought a precocious progress in my mode of thinking, she was so far from participating in his satisfaction, that

on these occasions she always urged having recourse to a governess. But my father used to reply, that "as he could not possibly guess at the folly, weaknesses, and errors which might be inculcated by a female, he would assure himself, by his own unwearied assiduity, that whatever Susanna learnt, was at least rational." And then he would refer her to the conversations which he had listened to between governesses and their pupils, in which their minds were *tortured* by lies told in sport by way of jokes, *debased* by a feminine and false manner of thinking, and *abused* by numberless mistakes in the shape of knowledge, which are always delivered undoubtingly, for confidence in the teacher, the mercenary teacher, must on no account be shaken. The words, 'I may be mistaken,' rarely issue from their mouths. They fancy that their credit and authority would be at stake, and they must go on, right or wrong, with a bold confidence.

"In my ninth year, my father became delicate, and soon fell into rapid consumption, of which he died when Georgina was a month old. No arguments, and he used many, could convince my mother that I was not the cause of his death, and this conviction generated in her a

coldness towards me, which none of my little advances could remove. Yet it was strange, that she should not have felt it a duty, setting affection aside, to love what he had almost adored. My light hair, my blue eyes, and rather pale complexion, became a sort of reproach, and were always contrasted with the fine dark hair and black eyes of my sister; and the remark was invariably followed up with,— ‘George is the image of her father, who at the age of fifty retained that fine ruddy hue which he lost by teaching Susanna.’ Instead of frequency blunting the edge of this observation, it sharpened it; my heart was wounded in proportion to the want which I now felt, and in consequence, the love which I naturally owed to my parent, settled into something like adoration for the memory of my father.

I had taken great pleasure in seeing my mother dress Georgina; and I am sure she could scarcely look upon her dimpled cheek and beauteous smile with more admiration than I did; but as her hair darkened and her cheeks reddened, my mother’s daily remark on her likeness to my father was uttered with a bitterness which went to my heart like a barbed arrow; so that, in order to avoid the undeserved reproach of having

killed my father, I absented myself at the hour of dressing my sister. This was soon observed, and—I am almost ashamed to repeat it—construed into envy. O! how little she knew my heart, and how much I loved both her and my sister! But a strange adverseness was in all my fate; and probably my own too great sensitiveness was at the root of the evils which pursued me. Being taunted upon this score, I became more and more solitary, and my mother's devotion to Georgina increased. Children are wonderfully quick-sighted, and my little sister soon found, that to report anything of Susanna was agreeable to my mother. What she did report, I cannot tell, for my employment was generally reading, and I cannot deny that she sometimes caught me in tears. She has confessed to me since, that an indifference to speaking truth became habitual to her, from the desire she felt, by little exaggerations, to give pleasure and excitement to my mother. Remember, it was not the pleasure of malignity which my mother felt; it was, I am certain, merely the desire of having something for the mind to work upon and to wonder at. This, I have remarked, is the root of most feminine defects, and proceeds entirely from

the mind being left to prey upon itself, or upon such unwholesome food as falls in its way. To what jealousies, gossipings, envyings, and wrath, does this mental vacuity and craving for excitation lead! It was soon feared by my mother's friends, and they probably had the hint from some of poor Georgina's prattle, that I was a discontented, pedantic girl, and I could plainly perceive that my presence in the drawing-room was productive of whispers, shrugs, and sneers. These circumstances drove me from it to the library, where I sought amusement and resource from sorrow in works of imagination. My taste led me to the most romantic and sentimental, by which means my sensibilities, which were naturally too acute, were nursed into absolute fastidiousness—at least, so I have thought, on comparing myself with others who could take and give the rebuffs of life. But yet I cannot agree with those who ascribe only noxious qualities to novels. They must be ignorant indeed of life, and weak as ignorant, who do not soon discover, that both virtue and vice are exaggerated in those works: I know, however, by experience, that a love of the first, and a detestation of the last, are very powerfully cherished by such com-

positions, when well executed ; and when they are not, they produce no effect whatever upon people of even ordinary sense and taste. A considerable knowledge of life, too, is derived from such novels as at that time, and a short period before, came into fashion ; so that I have always thought, that if a girl is in some respects deceived by poetic fiction, she is at the same time prepared for many events which would otherwise meet her totally defenceless.

“ My mother’s year of strict seclusion ; her careful nursing during that period of my sister ; her subsequent year of merely letting herself be visible ; and a third of visiting a very little, and seeing only a few particularly grave persons ; gave her a high character for prudence, conjugal feeling, and maternal devotion. Then the extreme beauty of the child ! I think I see her at this moment, with her round, fair, red and white countenance, her sparkling eyes lighted up with the perpetual consciousness of being an object of love, and her thick, dark, curled hair. No wonder that they all rushed upon the infant beauty, and uttered those exclamations which, I fear, she never forgot. Such confinement was not natural to my mother, and it was not surprising that in the

fourth year of her widowhood she began to be gay; in the fifth, very gay; and that in the sixth, our house was filled with as much company as my mother could afford to keep. It was impossible that I should not be seen, and that amongst some of our guests none should be found to take a little notice of me. But this notice came chiefly from strangers; for in exact proportion as my mother had been idolised for her abstinence, and now courted for her profusion, I was set at nought, it being no secret 'that somehow or other' my mother had reason to be displeased with me.

"However, the little notice I met with gave me courage to come more into society, and knowing that I was my sister's co-heir, I began to feel that I had some rights, and to suspect that I was not fairly treated. This, I dare say, often gave me the air of a person who was labouring under the influence of indignant feelings, and it was speedily whispered that I was a termagant. But I am certain that the flush of indignation must have been very rare; for the truth is, my mind soon became otherwise occupied than in anger at neglect. In listening to the conversation, which I did with avidity, of some intelligent men, I discovered that of

real life, of civil and biographical history, of nature, and of science, I knew nothing. I blushed for my ignorance, and while I resolved to avail myself of all the living information I could pick up, I devoted my mornings to the study of such standard books as I had heard alluded to; and as one led to another, I soon found a new world opened up to my view. Having owed this accession of knowledge to men only,—for our female society was surely below par,—I insensibly gave my attention and my ear entirely to the most enlightened I could select, and often with a beating heart put such questions as I could not solve in solitary study.

“ I speedily heard a new kind of taunt, and noticed a new species of observation on all I did or said; but I was so entirely free from every feeling of coquetry, and from every wish to attract notice, that I was the last, of perhaps a hundred persons, to know that at the age of seventeen, I had nearly lost my character. The discovery almost destroyed me. I shut myself up for some weeks without assigning any cause, and indeed none was asked. Georgina, who had made the first discovery to me, now came with another, viz. that I had met with a disappointment in love! This I scorned, for I

had never yet dreamt of the passion, or seen any one likely to call it forth. But at the end of six weeks, during which time I had never gone out, excepting in mornings or evenings when I was almost sure of not meeting any company, I was told by Georgina, that everybody said, 'I was not fit to be seen.' At first I had not the slightest comprehension of what she meant; but, poor thing, she had been so much with females, and her ears had drank in so much scandal, and so much of that whispered, base knowledge, which I have since learnt ill-educated women abound in, that she opened upon me a tide of information, that was equally shocking and surprising.

“My first sensation was that of unmingled anger; my next, deep sorrow; and my last, a determination to act an entirely new part, and to defy all the little people by whom I was surrounded. But I forgot that my mother had sanctioned, at least passively, these people, and I did not know, that at the age of seventeen, a lady's courage in so delicate a case must be very easily put to flight. However, I made the effort; and as my mother was to have a large party in the evening, I resolved to dress myself as well as I possibly could, and make

my appearance. It is now twenty-three years ago, but all the emotions of that evening are as fresh upon my mind, and as deeply pungent, as they were at the time. My mother and her friends had begun to think very little about me. She had looked in upon me once or twice a week, but morning preparations, either for going out or seeing company at home, occupied her so much, that she had little time to bestow even on Georgina, who was now under the care of a governess. I am aware that my mother did not lend herself to the scandal which Georgina informed me of, but she had been at no pains to inquire the cause of my retirement, to draw me from it, nor to assign any rational reason for my non-appearance. Indeed, if I must speak out, she had become, perhaps, something more than indifferent about me."

"That is astonishing! You must then have been just such another as Florence."

"No, I was very different from Florence. I wanted all the sparkling buoyancy of youth; my heart was chilled; it knew nothing of that bounding and unbounded confidence which a well brought-up girl feels in her mother; it was a stranger to that delicious sensation, that

fearless love, which will sooner reveal every weakness where it is most safe, than to the most beloved sister or best selected friend; for what on earth can equal a mother's love? But, alas! my heart and all its affections were thrown back upon me, like a dead, useless weight."

"Dreadful! Oh that I had been your confessor! And can you find a stronger proof of the poverty of your religious system? Should I not soon have discovered what it was that shaded your brow,—that cast down your eyes in sorrow, and that made your lips to quiver? Ah! Mrs Stanhope, let that very circumstance open up to you a new ray of light, until the full effulgence of our glorious church bursts upon your view."

"Indeed," said Mrs Stanhope, "I believe that some such interposition might have done an infinity of good, and saved me from years of grief, all hanging upon trifles, originating in falsehood. I wanted experience, had no advice, and was unfortunately possessed of a nicety of feeling, which I held it a principle to cherish rather than a duty to repress."

"Perhaps a tinge of pride too, which a disinterested and authoritative guide could have discovered and checked. But I interrupt you."

“Sustained by excessive and surely virtuous resentment, I dressed—and if I ever looked well, it was on that night. I was no beauty, but animated as I was, something adventitious might produce an universal glow, and ——”

“You need not hesitate; your look and air must have been such as speak to the eye and to the heart. But, Florence, I trust *your* looks will never have such adventitious aid as the heart-swelling indignation which must have animated your mother on that night.”

“When I entered the drawing-room, my mother was laughing heartily, more so than was usual with her, at something my sister had said, and a number of ladies were endeavouring to look highly interested. Two or three gentlemen with whom I used to converse, and a stranger whom I had never seen, were standing aloof. My heart still beats as I recollect the agitation with which I walked up to the tea-table; but, affecting as much unconcern and ease as possible, I took a seat, and poured out a cup of coffee. I could perceive that my mother looked up, and that the governess tittered; but all swam before my sight when Georgina exclaimed, ‘You see my sister is not ——’ But indeed I cannot repeat the

horrid words—everything disappeared ; the cup dropped from my hands, and I sunk down senseless. When I recovered, my first sensation was deep shame, and my next grief that I still lived. I was supported by an elderly gentleman, who used to take great pleasure in answering my literary questions, and opposite to me stood the stranger whom I mentioned before. Even at that dreadful moment, the intensity of his gaze could not be overlooked, and I instinctively shut my eyes to avoid the scrutiny of his. But wishing to avoid a continuance of anything like scenic exhibition, I assumed as firm an air as possible, when the stranger, seeing I was recovered, darted like lightning upon Georgina, shook her violently by the shoulder, and grinding his teeth, said, ‘ You young devil, if you were the princess royal of Britain, and heir-apparent to the throne, and your father looking upon me, I should turn you hence.’ So saying, he opened the drawing-room door, and giving her a violent slap on the back part of her neck, sent her away crying.

“ There was an immediate uproar—the ladies made a rush for the door, but Captain Stanhope (that was his name) put his back to it,

and asked if they had never before seen a spoilt-brat chastised?—‘By heaven!’ said he, again grinding his teeth and clenching his fist, ‘were she mine, she should know something of discipline.’

“While this strange outrage went on, I had time to recollect myself, and a sort of intuitive sense of what was due to my own dignity, impelled me to remain, and even to do more. I rose from my seat, and though my heart throbbed with agitation, I said, ‘I am sorry to have occasioned so much confusion, and whatever it may cost me, I am determined to explain the cause of my late retirement from society. But it is ——’ Here I was almost choked with shame and a sense of the causes of my seclusion; but I was resolved to go on, and gaining a mastery over myself, I said—‘I have appeared here tonight in opposition to all my feelings, but I found it absolutely necessary to do so.’

“Some of the ladies tossed their heads sneeringly, and my mother coming forward, interrupted me with the question of why it was more necessary now than before? I replied, ‘Because I found that I was most cruelly aspersed. I learnt something of the sort four months ago, but though base, it was compara-

tively unimportant.’—‘ Who is your informer?’ said my mother, and the same question was put eagerly by several ladies.—I could not think of naming my sister, and therefore stood silent. ‘ I beg,’ said Captain Stanhope, ‘ that you will give up your informer, and we may then trace the calumny to its source.—I was still silent; when my mother again approached me, and I could perceive that she expected me to name Georgina; but instead of that, I replied firmly, ‘ I shall name no one. It was not for that purpose I came here. Delay has given me more courage than I anticipated a few minutes since, and I beg even thus publicly to be heard. I am aware, that since the age of twelve I have been looked upon as a discontented, nay, perhaps an envious girl; but I sought solitude because my presence seemed to pain my mother, by recalling to her, more than was needful, the death of my father; to say nothing of what I suffered for having been thought the cause of that death.’”

“ ‘ How?’ said Captain Stanhope eagerly.

“ ‘ Owing,’ I replied, ‘ to the attention he had personally paid to my education.’

“ ‘ Thank God,’ said he ‘ that was no fault of yours.’

“As my love of solitude was often ridiculed, but never seriously counteracted, it grew upon me; but I declare solemnly, from no spirit of contradiction, but merely because I wanted courage to sustain me under the sort of pain which my appearance seemed always to call forth.

“‘You want no courage to-night,’ said my mother.

“‘By heavens,’ exclaimed Captain Stanhope, ‘you are mistaken, grossly mistaken. I have marked every throb, and I have seen a man set up to be shot at who did not betray a tenth of her agitation.’

“‘People are apt to be agitated when in anger,’ was the reply.

“I felt myself degraded by this sort of wrangling, and sat down, resolved to let the matter rest. A dead silence of some minutes ensued, during which time my resolves and counter-resolves flowed as rapidly as the blood to and from my heart. At last, the gentleman who had supported me when I fainted came forward, and said, ‘Miss Fortescue, having gone so far, though in my opinion it had been better to have let the matter rest, it is incumbent upon you to go farther.’

“ ‘And pray,’ said Captain Stanhope—But before I go farther, I must apologize for uttering the expressions of Captain Stanhope, but you cannot otherwise understand his character, which it is essential to me that you should do. ‘Pray,’ said he, ‘how the devil could she let the matter rest? Could she help fainting when—— But no more of this; let the young lady judge for herself.’

“ Had Mr Tarlton praised me, and encouraged me to go on, I should probably have failed, but his disapprobation gave me courage; nay, had the sympathy of Captain Stanhope been of any other character, it would have softened me too much, but it was calculated to give an impetus, as the conduct of Tarlton was to occasion that sort of pique which sometimes supplies the place of a more rational fortitude.

“ Borne up in this artificial kind of way, I said to him, ‘Your remark astonishes me. Do you mean to say, that hearing I was aspersed in a way which cannot be named, that I should continue shut up until it was past my power to negative falsehood? Or could you expect that I should not have felt what was calculated to shock the most obtuse? Seeking solitude at the age of twelve, because I felt or *imagined* that my

presence gave pain, I sought amusement in what I deemed an innocent resource—books; but of course I read only what was amusing; and when at the age of sixteen, in listening casually to the conversation of this gentleman and others, I found that though my reading had cultivated my taste and given me a little knowledge of what goes on in the world, it had left me ignorant of all that men of understanding seemed to value, I therefore began to feel pleasure in listening to improving conversation, sought out the books I heard alluded to, and very naturally, often found myself at a loss for fresh information. You, Mr Tarlton, and you, and you—(addressing myself to half a dozen)—be my judges, whether my conduct in the slightest manner could warrant any other construction than that of a desire for knowledge? No one answered.

“ ‘Why the devil don’t you speak?’ said Stanhope in a voice that made every one start, and produced such an effect upon the cowardly dinner-eaters, as it was almost impossible even then not to smile at. They hesitated for a moment, and perhaps recollected that Captain Stanhope was rich as well as fearless, for they one and all attested that it was impossible to

put any other construction on the conduct of one who was peculiarly modest and retired.

“ I resumed what I had to say, and stated, that I had been driven from this road to improvement by such insinuations as outraged the delicacy of correct feeling, and that again I sought retirement, when after six weeks I had learned that my seclusion was ascribed to love ! Captain Stanhope moved forward and repeated, ‘ To love ! ’ ‘ Yes,’ I continued, ‘ but I have yet to learn who was the object, for indeed I have never seen the man of whom I should think in any other character than that of a preceptor.’

“ I now considered for an instant whether I should go or remain ; but feeling that I had every right to do the latter, I seated myself with as composed an air as I could assume. Upon looking back, I suppose Captain Stanhope had watched my resolves, for he immediately uttered the word ‘ Right,’ and placing a chair close to mine, distressed me exceedingly by the eagerness with which he examined my features ; but feeling greatly obliged to the only individual out of twelve who had shewn the least interest in me, and unwilling to attract observation by any particular repulse, I endeavoured to seem un-

conscious of any extraordinary notice. Scarcely knowing what to do, afraid to look up, unwilling to give offence, even if I had felt sufficient courage to remove to a greater distance from Captain Stanhope, I sat as if spell-bound, but, God knows, with very uneasy sensations, when I heard the words, 'That is enough,' and a reply of, 'Yes, she sits a stare better than anybody I ever saw.' I was convinced that I was the subject of these remarks, and instantly rose to withdraw; but Captain Stanhope said, 'If you go, you do exactly what is wished. I see that my devotion injures you, but remain and defy them.' So saying, he turned to the next person, and entering into general conversation, relieved me from all further embarrassment on his account. I felt grateful to Captain Stanhope, but nothing more; unless indeed the sensation which is perhaps inseparable from the breast of man or woman, who for the first time is sensible of being an object of tender regard."

"Indeed! I should like to know that part of the history of the human heart—that which, it would seem, is a link between friendship and what is called love. Pray elucidate the subject."

"I think," said Mrs Stanhope, "that by a

very slight consideration of human nature, you will be convinced that a demonstration of being preferred by any individual to all others, and that for the first time, must be so flattering to self-love as to produce, unless when the object is peculiarly revolting, a species of gratitude distinguished from all other emotions of the mind. Certainly that was my case, for Captain Stanhope was of all men the last I should have chosen for a husband. He was forward, rash, violent, and endowed with an obstinacy which nothing could divert from its purpose. In the service of his country, I have no doubt this was called persevering fortitude, but in love it was dreadful. The expression of his face was indicative of all those qualities, but unfortunately he was handsome, was little accustomed to repulse, and was thoroughly satisfied, from the admiration he was used to, that he had only to sue and win. He had been singularly successful in war, and this circumstance strengthened the natural vanity of a very vain man. But he had been strongly and promptly excited in my behalf; he had supported me at a trying moment, and he was one on whose features you could not look without admiration, though in me it was always mingled with fear. Still the eye which

once met his and rested on his striking countenance, could not instantly withdraw itself, and would often return merely to contemplate a face of so bold and regular a form."

"Pray, madam," said Mr Ashburn, "describe him. I like to have an object placed before my eyes."

"Captain Stanhope is exactly five feet eight; and of a make which, having enjoyed as he had in an eminent degree all the advantages of early training, is more frequently to be met with in that stature than any other. He was muscular and well-proportioned, unless indeed that his shoulders and chest might be thought somewhat too broad; but of this he was particularly vain, and dressed in such a manner as to increase rather than diminish what he alleged had been acquired by a free use of his arms when a midshipman. His face was oval, well-proportioned, and, excepting the whitest forehead that could be seen, bronzed all over, so that a tinge of red in his cheeks was nearly lost in the surrounding brown. Black and nicely shaped whiskers almost approached his mouth, which was—but if you look at Florence, you will see an exact counterpart, the lips and teeth being precisely the same."

"So I can suppose, for I now observe that

they differ from yours, having more of that form which we see in pictures ; and truly, with such a mouth only, he must have been a goodly man to look upon."

" His eyes were prominent, black, and disagreeably piercing; and I think it was the excessive whiteness of his forehead, as forming too great a contrast with his hair and general complexion, which created, in me at least, a strange mixture of dislike and admiration.

" In a short time, Mr Tarlton, who perhaps began to anticipate in me the wife of the rich, handsome Captain Stanhope, came forward and hoped I had not taken offence at what was well-meant ; that he merely intended to intimate that a calumny so unfounded must of itself have died away. I turned from him in disgust, persuaded, that the true reading of his remark was, that the fame of a defenceless, unprotected person was of very little importance.

" I now began to learn that if men from education were less frivolous than women, the real moral stamina was the same in both ; and I felt as if I could have locked myself up from the whole human race. But mine was not a heart to be so locked up ; for at the same time that I detested the mean, greedy, temporising selfishness

of those around me, I sighed for the kindly sympathies of humanity. It was not surprising, under existing circumstances, if I received Captain Stanhope's attentions (before I guessed at his motives for paying them) with a sentiment of gratitude; but, accustomed as he was to success in all his advances of that sort, accustomed to be courted rather than to court, it was equally natural in him to misconstrue my most simple actions so as to make them respond to his own wishes.

“ I forced myself to continue in the drawing-room until the party broke up, because to have retired would have been considered as a proof of something wrong in myself, or a tacit acknowledgment that I had no right to be there; and upon the same principle I compelled myself to appear next morning. I was met with cold averted looks by my mother and the ladies who had remained all night; and Georgina's first address was a reproach for Captain Stanhope's treatment of her, and an assurance that he was laughing at me all the time. I was certain the remark was not her own, and feeling shocked at such continued persecution, I rose to withdraw. Just as I opened the parlour door, Captain Stanhope entered. I had seen enough of his perti-

nacity the evening before to guess that he was one of those characters with whom you must either entirely acquiesce or entirely quarrel; and to avoid either, I passed on with the quickness of lightning, lest he should offer to detain me. Instead of paying the compliments of the morning, or of saying that he had come self-invited, he instantly asked, if that was Miss Fortescue who had passed him so quickly? On being answered in the affirmative, he demanded the cause. The ladies looked at each other, and my mother was ashamed to assign any.

“ ‘ I can tell you,’ said Georgina, ‘ but you beat me last night, and I won’t.’ ”

“ Captain Stanhope knew enough of the world to feel assured that a distinguished navy officer of post rank, rich, handsome, and in the prime of life, could hardly offend an assemblage of ladies, where there was no one to call him to an account; and without condescending to ask another question, he quietly pulled the bell, and desired the footman to present his respects to Miss Fortescue, and say he had the honour of waiting breakfast for her.

“ What could I do? There was scarcely a message I could devise, in which there was not either impropriety or falsehood. To say that I

was unwell, or had already breakfasted, were untrue; to profess that I intended to breakfast alone, must have seemed capricious, as I had already appeared; and in short, reluctant as I was, compliance seemed my only resource. I had arisen from my seat; the servant had already quitted his hold of the door, and was about to move off, when I saw the degrading light in which I must appear, and ordering him to wait, I wrote as follows:—‘ Miss Fortescue is grateful for attention, but she cannot again force herself into society—at least, not just now.’

“ Captain Stanhope had never been restrained in his life; he had never known what it was to have a single wish thwarted. It is true, he had obeyed his superior officers; but to have done so without deviation formed a part of the foundation of that pride which actuated him in every step. He read my note twice over, and then exclaimed, ‘ How is this? ‘ Grateful for attention!’ It is a rare thing with her, it would seem. ‘ She cannot force herself into society again—’ So she appeared yesterday by self-compulsion! and she met with a beautiful reception! I more than half suspect—but no matter—give me pen and ink; and turning to the blank side of my note, he wrote—

“ ‘ My dear Miss Fortescue,—You cannot guess, accustomed as I am to summary proceedings, at the agony I feel, in not being able to render you prompt, ample, and lasting justice. But your fate is in your own hands. Appear, and I will support you though bearded by ten thousand devils. Yours, eternally.’ ”

“ Kindness, bestowed upon a young warm heart which has rarely tasted of its sweetness, is perhaps the most dizzying of all possible conferments. Upon a young heart, did I say? Alas! mine is as much alive to it as in my seventeenth year! My heart beat, and my eyes reeled, as I read the words, ‘ My dear Miss Fortescue.’ It was the first time in my life that I had been so addressed; the promise of support—the concluding profession, though mere words of course, and only warm in proportion to his character,—sent a thrilling sensation through my whole frame. But an instant dispelled the opium-like delusion, and I quickly felt assured, that by yielding, I should involve myself in fresh troubles. His fiery eyes, his dark countenance and alabaster brow, which had to my fancy something horrific in the contrast; his eager, resolute, and passionate manner,—all flashed upon me at once; and a cold chilliness succeeded to the dawns

of newly-awakened hope, that I had found a friend. My thoughts had been rapid, and my resolves were equally so; and desiring the servant to wait, I wrote—‘ In the house of my mother, I must have no protection but hers.’ He received the note, and then applied his hand so as to tear it, for he is very egotistic, and has told me the circumstance fifty times; but relenting, he folded it up, put it in his breast, and exclaimed, ‘ She is a noble creature!’ But, casting his eyes first on my mother and then on the other ladies, he saw a general sneer.

“ Suspicion was as easily awakened in Captain Stanhope as love, and it immediately occurred to him that there was something wrong in my character. But always prompt and firm, he went straight up to my mother, and demanded the cause of the sneer. She replied, ‘ that girls, especially those who had read many novels, often acted for effect.’ Captain Stanhope read my short note, and asked if any such thing was indicated, or if it was possible for a girl to be more firmly retiring from notice, or more respectful to a parent? My mother seemed struck by the words I had written, and immediately said that she would go for me herself. ‘ No,’ said he, ‘ something

must be done first. Before she appear, she shall either be condemned or acquitted. Of what is it that you suspect her?"—"Of nothing."—"Then why have you suffered her to be blighted, and why did you leave it to a stranger to punish the words of that little imp?"—"I gave no sanction to any aspersions."—"You sanctioned them this instant. Your sneer, and that of your pitiful company, stirred up in my breast a nest of adders. By God! you know not the danger—the endless, the eternal evil, of awakened suspicion."

"My mother was probably frightened by the vehemence of his manner, for she again rose to go for me. 'No,' said he, 'that won't do. Write as I direct: 'My dear child, I am afflicted that any injustice or cowardice of mine should have given a moment's authority to any slur upon your honour. I beg your pardon, and implore that you will join us immediately.'"

"My mother did as she was commanded. I read her note with astonishment, and hastened to comply with the first mandate she had issued to me for a long time. I went up to my mother with joy and alacrity, but her reception was so cold, that it instantly flashed upon me, that there was some trick, or at least compulsion. I now felt that there had been already far too

much notice attracted towards me, and that I was not called upon to do anything more than place myself at the breakfast table.

“ The forenoon passed on, with scarcely even a constrained civility towards me from my mother and her friends. Captain Stanhope remained, though still an uninvited guest, and I internally resolved that I should occasion no more scenes, and that whatever insults I might meet with, I was now old enough to maintain my own proper footing in my mother’s house; and accordingly, with a resolution that astonished myself, I took my place at the foot of the table, and by a violent effort went through the honours of it in a manner, which, unused as I was to such ceremonies, could be attributed only to the impetus which violently outraged feeling often imparts.

“ Captain Stanhope was restored to good humour, exhibited an amazing flow of spirits, paid attention to my mother, and even took a little notice of Georgina; in short, he was the hero of the day, and that was his element.

“ A few weeks passed on in this way, during which time Captain Stanhope went and came without leave asked or given. My mother’s friends were awed, and I was joined in all the

invitations which were sent to her ; but go where we would, Captain Stanhope was always of the party. He afterwards told me, that his servant was instructed to learn all our movements, and he had no scruple in doing precisely what pleased him. His attentions were all directed to me ; but I gave him no encouragement, unless ordinary politeness might be construed into such ; nor was it in nature that I could have done so, for every hour increased a shrinking fear of him, which I had felt, in spite of all my gratitude, from the moment that I had time to consider his face. But he was willing to be deceived, and construed a retired manner into the timidity of love ; while my mother and her friends, resolved on condemning me, all declared afterwards that I had given him the most decided encouragement, and shown a marked preference of him to many others, who, as I was new, crowded around me. Yet I solemnly declare that they were all alike objects of indifference to me, excepting, that in regard to Captain Stanhope, I had a kind of spell-bound awe, produced at once by the authority of his manner and the service which certainly he had rendered me.

“ New-year’s day arrived ; and as certain

epochs are apt to give a new spring to the mind, I resolved, with the commencement of the year, to shake off the ascendancy which Captain Stanhope seemed to assume over me. We were to dine at Mr Tarlton's, and I determined if possible to seat myself at a distance from and to affect an easy independence of him. I hurried to a place that was vacant, and very probably there was an eagerness in my manner; but my mind had been so much occupied by the execution of my plan, that I had scarcely noticed the company in the drawing-room, far less while in the act of being seated round the dining-table. I happened to seat myself between two gentlemen, one of whom had just come to his estate, was fresh from the university of Oxford, pleasing in his appearance, and bland in his manners. I felt like a school-girl who has just escaped from thralldom, yet I durst hardly look around me, from an indefinite dread of Captain Stanhope,—such is the benumbing power of patronage in every shape;—and when at last I met his eye, it fell upon me with a scowl, which is yet as present to my mind and feelings as at that moment. I instantly looked at my mother and a friend of hers, in both of

whom, also, I read something pointed at me, but which I could not possibly comprehend.

“ A strong-minded man, like you, Mr Ashburn, whose very boyhood prepares for the world’s attritions, cannot form the most distant idea of the painful heart-flutterings of a timid girl entering into life, who is not properly supported by parental kindness. But where obviously the reverse of this is the case, her situation is dreadful, because unkindness in a parent, especially a mother, is so unnatural, that suspicion, the food of weak, envious minds, must do its foul work upon her. It is often in such circumstances that a sensitive mind, shrinking from the sneer, the frown, and the prying eye, glad to find sympathy anywhere, is decoyed and deceived into ruin. It was in vain that I endeavoured to rally my spirits. It seemed to my quick anticipation, that a new series of evil was at hand, and the most I could do was to maintain my self-composure.

“ How was this painful terror, of I scarcely know what, interpreted? And to what cause do you think it was assigned by the poor busy creatures around me? That I had fallen suddenly in love with the Oxonian, and my expertness and

management in placing myself next him were extolled with that malignant praise so well understood by old and envious coquettes !

“ Dinner was scarcely over, when the attention of the company was directed to the arrival of a post-chaise. Mrs Tarlton looked in consternation. Had her husband forgotten to name any of the intended guests? Was it possible that they had begun dinner before all the company had arrived? But the enigma was quickly solved by Captain Stanhope, who had run to the window, exclaiming, ‘ By Jove, my brother Jack ! What the devil has brought him here ? ’ The young gentleman sent for his brother, who in a few minutes introduced him as Mr John Stanhope, a newly-passed midshipman, who had no business to have left Portsmouth, and still less to ferret him out, on being disappointed in finding him at his lodgings. The youth made some good-humoured remarks upon the pleasures of the day, and the horrors of sitting solitary in a noisy hotel at ——. He placed himself next to his brother ; and being exactly opposite to myself, and the company occupied in observing the stranger, I had an opportunity of noticing the expression of Captain Stanhope’s face, and of comparing the strongly-

contrasted countenances of the brothers. They were indeed as unlike in character as in external appearance. John Stanhope was fair; his features not so regularly handsome as those of his brother; but they were luminously expressive of a soul which gladdened every feature, and seemed even to expand itself over his easy, slight, and elegant form. He had all his brother's ease but none of his forwardness; his decision, without his overwhelming impetuosity; and his firmness, without the slightest tinge of obstinacy. When we rose to withdraw, Captain Stanhope moved to the dining-room door, and seizing my hand, said in a hoarse whisper, 'You are altered, and I am cursed!' His words fell on my ear like the screams of an ill-omened bird, and seemed a presage of future evil. Any malediction on himself I considered as nothing, for it was his usual mode of expression; but a serious charge of change on my part implied what he had never hinted before, serious expectations from me.

"I sat down on a sofa dismayed and dejected, for I knew by experience how quick all ears were in hearing anything to my disadvantage, and how freely a bad use would be made of whatever was heard, and I determined to seize

upon the first opportunity which offered of being even publicly explicit with him. My abstraction was soon observed, and a friend of my mother asked me ‘whether it was the rich Oxonian or the handsome midshipman who was so fortunate as to occupy my thoughts?’ Perhaps I ought to have laughed at such impertinent insinuations, and probably I owe to my excessive fastidiousness all the evils which have pursued me; and self-blame has not been the least of them. I rose from my seat, and I dare say looked displeased, when my mother said in a calm, expostulating tone, ‘It is a pity, Susanna, that you should give way to such gusts of passion.’ I looked at her in amazement, and could perceive in a moment that the whole circle sympathised with my unfortunate mother.

“Constantly misconstrued, and bowed to the very earth, I resolved to abandon myself to my fate, when Captain Stanhope entered, and, to my surprise, in perfect good humour. He placed himself as usual beside me, and I now felt that not a single course was left for me which I could pursue with impunity. If I was cold to Captain Stanhope, it would immediately be whispered that my thoughts were engaged with the strangers;—and by the bye, I

must here remark, that it is this idle prying, conjecturing, and insinuating of elder ladies, which puts lovers into the heads of younger ones. If I was frank and cheerful with Captain Stanhope, then I was fond of his society; and if I showed a decided opposition to his wishes, then I was inconstant, or perhaps said to be repulsing what had no meaning. I braced up my mind for the occasion as well as I could, determined to act with female delicacy, place my fate where I ought, and submit to the results of such conduct as I best could."

"You were right," said Mr Ashburn, "in your two first resolves, but wrong in the last; for not as we *can*, but as we ought, is the duty of a Christian. But I forget—you had no guide."

"Indeed," replied Mrs Stanhope, "you say most truly—I had no guide."

"And yet you would cut off your daughter from the only true earthly preceptor—the only one sanctioned by a divine master—the only masculine counsellor who can be listened to with perfect safety. If an unmarried Protestant priest is your confident and adviser, what is the result? Affairs of the heart take place—alas! such as are and ought to be far removed

from his profession, and he is no longer a judge of your actions. Nor will the world's clamour permit such an intimacy, even if your own hearts were cold and indifferent to each other. I learn, that of all men the Protestant priest is the most gay and gallant; and that although even the world and his own brethren are spies upon him, that he not unfrequently goes to the very verge of propriety, and that he and his love-affairs are often subjects of public trial and discussion. Is this, I would ask you, the life of a priest? And are its consequences fit themes for holy fathers to sit in judgment upon? Woe's me for the havoc which these levities are making even in their own ill-constructed fabric! And if they are married men, what then? Even if their minds were left sufficiently at ease from the cares of a family, to be directed to the comfort, consolation, and admonition, of perhaps ten or twenty persons daily, as we are, is it safe or meet to confide your secrets, your most private and precious thoughts, to the ear of a man who belongs to another? nay, whose very interest it may often be to traverse your hopes, and to augment the cause of your fears? This sacerdotal system is indeed a monstrous one, gene-

rated in the worst of levity, and continued in the very teeth of decency. And believe me, that the love of a reckless freedom—the love of those indulgences which should be far from his thoughts, will ultimately destroy themselves, and what is worse, involve their unhappy, neglected flocks in their own ruin. I speak not from prejudice—I speak not from professional dislike—for I love all men, and I believe there is salvation for all men who do not fly in the face of God, of grace, and of good works; but I speak from all that I see and hear. Look at the two great national churches of Britain! What do you behold? The legitimate pastors, as they deem themselves, superseded by thousands of innovators, and consoling themselves with what? I declare, I blush to name it—that their livings cannot be innovated upon. Is this the true cure of human souls? But I crave your pardon; my zeal for Florence, and for thousands who are at this moment perishing in many a fair county of England for lack of spiritual care, often makes me forget all else.”

Mrs Stanhope felt that there was something so sacred and so holy in his warmth, that it was some time before she ventured to speak. At last she said, “Florence is more fortunately

circumstanced than I was ; she has a mother, who knows no other care than herself, and who will always be ready and willing to give her counsel."

"True, my dear madam, but a mother is not an impartial judge ; and you will be as apt to split upon the rock of over-indulgence, as your mother did on that of mistaken severity."

"That is indeed what I fear," said she, while she could hardly repress a smile on thinking that the rock she feared splitting on was the very one on which he wished her to rest ; and wishing to gain time, and being really afraid of giving pain to her sister, she hinted, that if convenient for him, she would delay the rest of her story till his first spare day. This he agreed to, and promised to call next morning at the same hour.

CHAPTER X.

MR ASHBURN did not fail in his appointment, and Mrs Stanhope resumed her little history:—

“ Captain Stanhope began in a whisper to apologise for what he had said, alleging that he was under the influence of bad humour, excited by the circumstance of being placed at a distance from me, and that it was possible another should enjoy my smiles. My heart beat with terror at this declaration, and at the farther involvement of myself by submitting to private conversation with a person who was determined on deceiving himself. But what course could I pursue? To continue a whispered conversation, however inimical to his views, was to subject myself to a thousand suspicions and misrepresentations. I confess frankly, Mr Ashburn, I would have welcomed death at that moment. What had I to live

for? The attentions of men whom I disliked and the sneers of even my mother for a train of incidents over which I had no control.”

“Aye, to *you* the asylum of a blessed convent had at once removed you from evil and placed you in security. I doubt not, that the daughters of levity, those who have paraded the haunts of effrontery, could have laughed at all those things; but your delicacy of feeling required the countenance of a wise and kind friend. Pray, how did you extricate yourself from this bold man?”

“I mustered up all the courage I was mistress of, and said quite loud, ‘I think, Captain Stanhope, the practice of conversing in knots has become too general in society; pray set the example of putting an end to it.’—‘With all my heart,’ said he; ‘I never have a thought that I am afraid to avow; and I here solemnly declare, that an hour ago I was in a most cursed humour; that you were the cause, from no fault in you, but in myself, and in a hint from an obliging lady; and I farther declare, and swear, that I devote myself to you while a drop of blood runs through my heart.’

“‘Upon my word,’ said a lady, ‘you have taken a politic step, Miss Fortescue: we must

all suspect that you guessed at the first-fruits of this unwhispered conversation.'

"There was now no time for hesitation or false delicacy; all was at stake; and turning round to the lady, I said, 'I do not know by what strange destiny it is that all I say, and whatever I do, are liable to misconstruction. Heaven knows, I have acted at this moment from the purest motives, and that it pains me much to say anything that can give the slightest umbrage to you, Captain Stanhope; but it was to avoid all particular conversation that I begged ours might be public.' I saw a sneer upon several faces, and I added, 'I am aware, it may seem presumption in me to have expected anything meant for my private ear, but Captain Stanhope will not deny, that what he commenced with was calculated to make me apprehend what he has just declared.'—'Apprehend!' said he, 'why apprehend? Are the views which you must have known from the first a subject of apprehension?'—'Then,' I replied, 'I am indeed unfortunate.'—'Unfortunate! I am despicable then in your eyes?'—'Surely,' said I, 'there is a medium between being despicable, and ——' I could not go on.—'And beloved—None, Miss Fortescue,

between me and you. I must be your all, or your detestation. You my all, or ——' he made a long and fearful pause—'or, may I be blasted for ever.'—'You see,' said my mother, 'to what you have brought yourself.'—This charge agonised me; but I had courage to say, 'Surely, my dear mother, you cannot suppose that I have given any undue encouragement to Captain Stanhope.'—'I seldom trust to my own judgment,' said she calmly; 'all the country has seen it, and I must say, I thought you a very fortunate woman.'—'I am peculiarly the reverse,' said I, 'in many respects, and most especially in this. And it is no small part of my misfortune to be thus dragged into such public avowals; but I have no choice; and since it is so, I implore, Captain Stanhope, that you will hear me. I could not but feel grateful for your attention on the first night I saw you, and ——' 'For beating your sister,' said my mother.—'Enough,' I replied; 'I see my doom is fixed. I know not how or why, but I am a destined victim, and it is in vain for me to offer a word in my own defence.'

"Captain Stanhope came forward, and said, 'I am glad you see your true and actual situa-

tion: be wise, and in the most devoted of husbands you will find the most determined of protectors. An object of envy is always an object of misconstruction, but the creature lives not, who durst insult my wife.'—Every moment seemed to involve me farther, and to call upon me for the most decisive conduct; and I replied with firmness, 'You again fill my heart with the warmest gratitude, but indeed it is impossible that I can ever be your wife.'—He made no reply, but regarding me with a look of fearful wrath, he left the room, and ordering his carriage, drove off with his brother, upon the plea of sudden indisposition.

"His departure removed a load from my mind, and I felt all the sweets of self-gratulation; for whatever treatment might ensue, whatever calumny might be got up upon the report of my conduct, I was satisfied that I had no other resource with so bold, so confident, and so fearless a man. My mother looked surprised, but said nothing; and the ladies, perhaps tired of the subject, began the amusements of the evening.

"In a few days we learned that Captain Stanhope had set off on the instant, accompanied by his brother, and I enjoyed a compara-

tive repose of mind for some time, though I was still liable to taunts, sneers, and inuendos, notwithstanding the most anxious care to avoid all cause for them. Perhaps, indeed, my excessive solicitude only served to whet virulence; because I have always remarked, that it is the fastidious who are particularly selected as fit victims for the shafts of malignity. But it is a melancholy fact, that with the multitude, misfortune is the watchword for a certain species of persecution. One would have thought that I was placed beyond the reach of evil, possessed as I was of an ample fortune, and living under the apparent care of my mother. But my mother's coldness to me excited a suspicion that there must be something wrong in me; and suspicion once awakened, is, as Captain Stanhope said, a nest of adders. But, in my case, they preyed on me, not on the bosoms of those who had conjured them up.

“I have observed all my life, in the cases of unfortunate persons, that even the wise, the considerate, the kind and candid, seek the cause in the unhappy individuals, not in circumstances. And with all due deference to you, and the highest admiration of Miss Edgeworth, as well as a lively sense of the benefit

she has rendered the world, I must say she has in one of her Tales greatly injured the cause of the unfortunate. A cold-hearted world, ever ready to say of the wretched, 'There must be something wrong,' needed not a systematic proof that all evil springs from our own fault, and that a virtuous perseverance will at last prove successful. To our own hearts it will; but it is only good-fortune, obvious and palpable good-fortune, which can ensure the world's general esteem. 'The esteem of all good men,' the moral of the tale will tell us. Where are the good men? They are so mixed up in the mass, and are so beclouded by the hints, suspicions and conjectures of others, to say nothing of worldly claims, which even those good men cannot shake off, that their opinions and esteem are sucked into the general vortex.

"Whether it was owing to my retired manners, or rather to my wish of avoiding all particular notice, or to the *éclat* of having refused so bold, handsome and rich a man as Captain Stanhope, I cannot tell, but it was my misfortune to become a favourite with the gentlemen, and to be selected as a chief object of attention as soon as I entered a room. I need hardly point out

to you the effect which this produced on the females around me. Perhaps even a gentleman, circumstanced as I was, could such an event happen, might have found amongst his compeers the same envying conjecture, of how, or why, he was so preferred? I believe it was settled down into an opinion that I had more cunning than others. But when I refused the Oxonian, and some others of nearly equal rank and fortune, conjecture became so painful, that they settled the point at once, by supposing and asserting that I had formed some attachment of so inferior a kind, that I was ashamed to avow it. In spite of all I could do to prevent it, Georgina tormented me by those and a thousand other reports; but I merely hint at such as are essential to your comprehending the sort of life I led. I often appealed to my mother, and assured her that she had only to frown upon my calumniators to put a stop to their insinuations; her answer invariably was, 'Establish yourself in life, and defy all calumny.' It was in vain that I asked why there should be calumny? 'You know best,' was the reply. I should have told you, that Captain Stanhope again relented, and that he wrote me, intimating that he was willing to believe me under the influence of a girlish shy-

ness, and conjuring me to think better and recall my refusal.—I answered him with respectful firmness in the negative, and here the matter rested.

“At the end of my eighteenth year, and about Midsummer, my mother became uneasy on account of Georgina’s health; sea-bathing was ordered, and in talking of various places, I happened to mention the Isle of Wight. Its vicinity and some other circumstances rendering it preferable, we went to that place, accompanied by a party of ladies.

“We had not been there a week, when one day I strolled, as I sometimes did, from my mother’s party. I had stood for some time in that state of half insensibility which is entirely peculiar, at least with respect to my own feelings, to the contemplation of the sea, when in a calm state it is returning with slow but sure progress to its destined mark.—I recollect still, with uncommon vividness, the sensations and impressions of that moment. The sun was shining in all his glory; the sea glittering; the waves undulating in their most quiescent state, and sending forth the most heart-touching, soothing, and yet melancholy of all sounds. ‘Such,’ I thought, ‘is an emblem of the state in which

humanity should subsist; our passions never more agitated than to indicate their existence, and never to exceed a certain boundary, while a God of mercy shall shine upon and gladden the whole. I regretted that, as far as my experience went, the very reverse of all this was the case, and that man seemed only in his element when resembling the sea in its most fretful and tempestuous moods.

“While these thoughts and the object which called them forth rivetted me to the spot, a youth in the uniform of a navy lieutenant passed close by me; he turned slightly round, when, to my surprise, I recognised young Stanhope. I had by this time a dread of all intercourse with gentlemen, for it was impossible for me to deport myself in such a manner as not to incur censure, and I hurried instinctively away, so as to avoid him. But he knew me immediately; and although I was aware that being seen in his society would subject me to remark and ridicule, if not calumny, yet it was utterly impossible to prevent his seeing me home. Almost sickened by the anticipation of exchanged looks and next of sarcastic insinuations, I walked on, scarcely knowing the questions he put or my own replies.

“Our party had returned, and the certainty

of what awaited me threw an awkwardness and restraint over me, which of itself led the way to impertinences common with women, and by way of joke, but which cut deeply into sensitive minds. Mr Stanhope was however cordially received and kindly invited to dinner, which invitation he accepted. I had of late been so accustomed to the attention of gentlemen, and had been so invidiously treated on account of it, that I felt relieved in at last meeting with a person who took no particular notice of me, and I congratulated myself on the hope of escaping animadversions in this instance. He was the only gentleman of the party, and on the account just mentioned, I got into an unusual flow of spirits. What was my amazement, after he took leave, to find it unanimously resolved, that I knew of the — sloop of war being off St Helen's; that I had therefore recommended the Isle of Wight; that I had left the party that day and previously, in the hope of meeting Mr Stanhope, and that the extraordinary *good humour* I had exhibited was in consequence of having seen him! I thought it beneath me to utter one word of defence, and my mother told me gravely, that my silence was confirmation sufficient, and that my refusal of so many

good offers was now accounted for. ‘Surely,’ said I, ‘you are all thoroughly assured that I never saw Mr Stanhope until this day but for one hour?’—‘As far as we know,’ was the reply, in affected jocularly, by a lady about my age. I looked at her with unqualified astonishment, and said, almost in tears, that I believe they would drive me into a solitude which I should never forsake.—‘Love-stricken, to a certainty,’ was the cruel and unfeminine answer.

“I once thought of making a solemn appeal to my mother’s justice; but though I had been most unwilling to make the discovery, I could no longer conceal from myself, that my mother had no settled opinions of her own, but was the slave of other people’s. This conviction and the speech just uttered, determined me to do what was certainly the course of common sense, namely, to persist in keeping my proper place in my mother’s house, and leave events to chance.

“A few weeks went on, and the party seemed well satisfied, that at last an agreeable and handsome young man had become intimate in the family, over whom the decoying and sly arts of Susanna had no influence. What became of their first supposition I never knew, but it is

easy to get quit of any previous notion that interferes with a more favourite one. Of all their acquaintances, Mr Stanhope stood in pre-eminent estimation. He became the idol of my mother, who was continually extolling his good sense, delicacy of general demeanour, and his unobtrusive politeness; and though she was a woman of even cold prudence, she was not displeased with what became a standing joke, that by the time Georgina was seventeen, Mr Stanhope would be a distinguished Post-Captain, and that fourteen years on the side of the gentleman was no great disproportion.

“ I confess that I was fully as sensible to his merit as any of the party, but still I never regretted that he kept aloof from me; indeed I am fully persuaded, that no woman whose feelings are in accordance with what seems to be the law of nature, and at all events of society, will ever confer upon a man, be his attractions what they may, unsought affection.

“ The ladies had joked my mother into serious thoughts respecting Georgina, and it was perhaps under the influence of this strange fancy, that she became every day more attached to him. As my mother generally acted upon the very square of prudence, I was grieved to

see that she evinced too evident a satisfaction when Mr Stanhope paid my sister attention, and seemed painfully disappointed when her little stories and girlish *agrémens* passed unnoticed by him; and I was the more vexed at these circumstances, upon being satisfied that her unworthy satellites were privately turning her into ridicule, after having first suggested, and then fostered, the absurd hope. But it was not for me to give any caution. However, at the end of two months, Mr Stanhope became dull, abstracted, and evidently averse from the child. He would even turn from her suddenly if she came near, and took no pains to conceal his disapprobation of almost every word she uttered. I was surprised, for Mr Stanhope's was not the breeding of mere rule, but was stamped by that genuine politeness which springs from a heart under the guidance of pure benevolence, and the best principles. It was then I saw how deeply my poor mother had been influenced by the parasitical fools around her; and much as I dreaded to interfere, it was with difficulty I restrained myself from giving her a caution to be more guarded. The subject, however, was of such delicacy,

and her supposed weakness so absurdly grounded, and my own footing with her so unhappily precarious, that I feared to take a single step in the affair. But all of a sudden the visits of Mr Stanhope ceased. He gave no reason, sent no apology, but came not. It was curious to remark the shock which every one seemed to feel, while I rejoiced that my mother would no longer indulge in a hope so degrading to her, that I should not have mentioned it, if my fate had not in a great measure hinged upon it. I had also another cause of rejoicing: Mr Stanhope had appeared to me the most amiable, the most agreeable, and the handsomest man I had ever seen, and I felt a buoyancy, even on my own account, that he had removed himself, and that I had hitherto so carefully guarded my affections.

“ Perhaps you may have remarked, short as our acquaintance is, that mine is a face upon which all my thoughts and feelings are portrayed, and the party quickly observed that I was unusually pleased.—‘ You are the only one,’ said Miss Tarlton (an elderly lady, sister of the gentleman I mentioned before) ‘ who seems glad at the absence of Mr Stanhope.

When he was here, you scarcely ever smiled, seldom spoke, and now you are the most gay amongst us.'

"Conjecture was awakened. There must be a cause for these anomalies; and my poor mother was speedily persuaded, as I could guess from hints and insinuations, that I rejoiced because there was an end to the hopes she had entertained for Georgina; and what had before been little more than a negative manner towards me, now bordered on obvious dislike. I could not bear this, conscious as I was, that no wish was so near my heart as my mother's respectability, and the real good of my sister. I therefore sought an interview with her, and laid open all that I had observed in the people around her, and hinted as delicately as I could, that they were abusing her hospitality, and in many instances her credulity. I conjured her to believe that she had not in the world as sincere a friend as myself, nor any one so truly concerned for her happiness.

"Alas! I was ignorant of human nature. I did not know that there are very few whose strength of mind, especially in those who pique themselves upon unswerving propriety of conduct in all the minutiae of life, can carry them

through upon even a supposition of having erred. My mother could have forgiven, or at least not cared about, an act of disobedience; she could have despised want of respect, and perhaps have only erected herself more highly; she could have been entirely indifferent as to my affection for her; but in even hinting that her judgment had been imposed upon, I incurred an incurable and invincible dislike. I had touched as delicately as possible upon the affair of Georgina; I confess that I even temporised a little, and spoke of it as a mere jest amongst them all, until malignity made a handle of it against myself. I suppose it was her own consciousness which gave the fatal blow to her self-love, and totally wrecked the little affection which till then she had, I believe, cherished for me. Bitterly did I regret my interference, for I did no good to my mother, and ruined myself for ever in her regards. Indeed, I strengthened the hands of her advisers; for the whole being narrated to them, they reconciled her to herself, by artfully persuading her, even in my own hearing, that she had good-humouredly indulged them in a joke, which none but a self-willed, foolish young woman, could have believed them serious in;

and hinted, that young as Georgina was, her surpassing attractions had already excited my jealousy. I had all my life considered jealousy as so mean and little a passion, that this charge overcame me, and I burst into tears, when I was congratulated on at last feeling compunction for such treatment of so kind and good a mother.

“There was something so unjust in this perpetual interference, that I felt an indignation which tended to support me, although I believed such treatment altogether uncommon. But I have since learnt, that ——”

“You need not tell me,” said Mr. Ashburn. “Alas! do I not know that the true legitimate cement of society being set at nought, thrown aside, and trampled under foot, that which was formerly managed by one individual in a wide circle, and that one uniting all, is now aimed at, nay, seized upon, by the whole community, each grasping at an absurd power; each endeavouring to control and convince his neighbour, but wanting authority, it ends in universal discord and constant umbrage. For who without wounding human pride can say, ‘Thou dost wrong?’ And therefore reproof and interference are inefficacious.—But go on.”

“I have lived to see that there was nothing very peculiar in my situation, though certainly it was carried to an extreme by my mother’s partiality to her youngest child, and by her being too easily led. Besides, I had myself to blame for fostering fastidious delicacy of feeling and sentiment, which bared every nerve, and laid me open to every vulgar assault; whereas I should have endeavoured to blunt the edge of such extreme nicety, and have assumed either a philosophical or worldly indifference.”—

“You are wrong, entirely wrong. What you call over-fastidiousness, was neither more nor less than true moral tact; at least as far as I can yet judge. Some are born without it; and such, if perchance right principles are not inculcated, and that very early, become easy and ready votaries of vice. Or if, as I said, they are happily instructed in time, they then become cold-hearted moralists, who act from duty, never from impulse. But when such as you, with feelings which may be either our greatest bane or our greatest good, in order to become easy, tranquil, and free from the wounds which the base delight to inflict, resolve on blunting or annihilating these pure

springs of virtue, you then become the very chief servants of the devil, the world, and the flesh. I know well that such feelings, as I see influenced your conduct are extremely uncomfortable, but without them, what are we? Of the common herd. It is very true, you wanted guidance: a true ghostly instructor would have taught you that only compromise, which deducts nothing from the most exalted human dignity. Yes, a medium could have been pointed out; but who had the right? A secular had been deemed presumptuous, and your unauthorised clergy methodistic. But still, complain not of that native delicacy, that natural defence, to the want of which we may ascribe more than half the immorality and hard-heartedness which disgrace the age. But you may clearly perceive in your own case the effect which would have been produced from a free confession of mother and child; it would, in fact, have led to a complete and effective counteraction.”—

“ It is consolatory that you do not think me to blame, for in spite of all my taxings and self-examinations, I could not see how it was possible for me to have felt less, or to have acted otherwise. Still, I endured much self-

condemnation. It is true, my mother first taught me to feel that my presence was painful, because it reminded her of my father; or if, as I have since suspected, it was a mere habitual way of speaking, for the first two or three years of her widowhood; still, I was too young to guess at that, and if I had, I was old enough to have felt pained by such familiarity with the memory of one so dear. When this wore off, I next found myself in the way; I annoyed Georgina; I fretted her by standing too much between her and the light; I did not come near enough to let her pull my hair; or I did not understand quickly enough what toy she wanted; and, above all, I was not sufficiently accommodating to the child. Was I to blame, if, despairing to please, I appeared as little as possible, until solitary results on my part, and a daily increasing estrangement on my mother's, were the consequences? Yet, on observing the world, I have thought the fault all mine. Other children take and return rebuffs, and all seems to go on with the enjoyment of the mother's affections bestowed equally. I must still imagine, that had I been less nice, all might have been well."

"You mistake entirely," said Mr Ashburn;

“ it is the want of that very nicety—yea, a fastidious nicety, which demoralizes the world. Think ye, if that scrupulous delicacy of feeling which you complain of, were universal, or even somewhat general, that we should witness that utter indifference to the rights of others, which ends in open depredation? Or that unfeeling cruelty, which commences in childish tormentings and ends in adult murders? No; you regret possessing a delicacy of feeling, which, it is true, unfitted you for the coarse enjoyments of life, and which, believe me, are as few as they are coarse; so that, after all, you would have found the exchange a miserable one. It is true, children take and give rebuffs, and the mother in low life, as the nurse in high, deals about indiscriminate castigation. And what is the result? That fearful domestic warfare which is so universal. I will not attempt to deny that human nature is everywhere the same, primarily speaking, but we all know that it is modified by circumstances. And what circumstance can have so powerful an effect as religion? But concentration is necessary to that effect. It must not be that religion which resembles the thin scattered vegetation of the burning desert; it must be that which resembles the thick, rich luxu-

riance of the cultivated field, which has been carefully nourished, amply sown, and having the eye of an assiduous husbandman to point out where the tares or other weeds are likely to injure the main crop. Yes; unless you look up to an earthly head, who has *unequivocal* delegated power and authority, it is impossible to secure wholesome and binding rules. Unquestionably you have your priests; but where is their influence? Nay, where, when, or how can they use it? In some cases of notoriety. But where is the every-day domestic regulator? Or with what propriety, as I said before, can a young priest, looking about him for a wife, be selected as the guide of females? And still less the priest who, with his own domestic claims hanging about him, brings either an estranged or an interested ear. Madam, the want of religious mortar, cement, cohesiveness, is so palpable, that I wonder it escapes the eye of even ordinary penetration. But no! I do Protestants wrong; it does not escape them: they feel the want in the air they breathe—they feel it in every word—in every look—in every movement. But how do they feel it? I repeat it, *how* do they feel it? Rejoicing in their licentious freedom. As one of your own reformers

(Erasmus) said, ‘I see no man better, but worse, for this Evangelical liberty: so that I am heartily grieved for all that I have heretofore written or said in favour of it.’ And gladly would he, had his strength of body permitted, have joined the Carthusian to whom he wrote his doleful description of the profligacy into which the reformers had fallen. It is self-evident, that had your mother looked up to a spiritual guide, she would have had at least a chance of having her eyes opened to the frightful partiality into which she fell: and you would have had your delicacy of feeling strengthened in a true and proper manner, so as to make it subservient to piety, not a thing placed in its stead. Still it was well you had it, for without that internal, intuitive check, you had been one of the coarse, common herd.”

“But surely, my dear sir, you cannot be insensible that Catholic countries abound as much in domestic feuds as any other.”

“No, I do not believe that to be the case. You will find the peasantry in Catholic countries ten-fold more virtuous than in this, and you will find much more simplicity and devotion amongst the middle classes than with us, that is, where the priests have proper influence. No doubt,

infidel speculation, which commenced with reformation and now pervades all ranks, has tended to weaken the hands of the very best of us. It is also true, that in wealthy and noble families, where ambition rules, you see fearful examples of discord and animosity; but we do not pretend to be omnipotent over human passion—we can merely use the means: and I aver, that where these means are faithfully used, and respectfully regarded, that they will be efficacious, ten-fold, aye, a hundred-fold more than your cold stated dual sermons of a Sunday, or a perfumed visit, with a dinner or supper-party. It has been lately said of us, and most truly, that we are an itinerating clergy: for even those who have fixed livings, like Mr D'Alembert and myself, do more duty in a week than a Protestant clergyman thinks it incumbent upon him to do in ten. Indeed, I am told that the Calvinistic clergy in Scotland hold yet more disgraceful sinecures than in England. For in England, the funeral-services, week-day prayers, and monthly sacrament, keep up a form of religion, a sort of occasional acknowledgment of the Great Supreme; but in Scotland, I am told that a man is committed to the dust with scarcely a reference to that God who is judge over all:

and that the sacramental observance, which they acknowledge as a remembrancer of Christ, but far more as a sort of public *muster*, is dispensed *once* or *twice* a-year! And that a clergyman, who visits his flock *once* in a sort of formal manner in the same time, is supposed to have arrived at the very acme of his clerical duties. However, as *we* are much aspersed, I suspend my belief of so incredible and hideous a report, until a friend of mine, a Mr Sportinville, arrive from that country. I do not mention our labours in self-eulogy; it is not individual praise, if that is praise which represents a mode of life, that even when best observed does not nearly reach the most moderate examples which are held up for our imitation. But, alas! it is the fashion now, in these lands, to scoff at ascetics, and to deem our early saints fanatics! I repeat it, your own story affords a strong proof of the demoralizing tendency of that system, which has given to scattered flocks a mere nominal shepherd.—But proceed, for I interrupt you too much; and I am anxious to hear more of Mr Stanhope the younger.”—

“In four days, I received a letter to the following effect—”

“If you have the letter, and if it is not too

painful a task, I should like to hear it. All letters, and discourses, and parliamentary speeches, are injured, if not destroyed, by being reported in the third person, and such a mode should be avoided as much as possible."

Mrs Stanhope opened a small cabinet, and taking out a parcel of letters, withdrew the first and putting it into Mr Ashburn's hand, he read aloud as follows:—

"To say that I can no longer oppose a passion which has yet only my own sanction to support it, or that I cannot hope to struggle against that which has been represented as nearly culpable, at least by insinuation, would be to speak the language of a romantic school-boy; for certainly reason would be conferred in vain, if inadequate to our guidance in an affair which of all others is the most important. And above all, I should be unworthy of your esteem, if I were one who can oppose no curb to his inclinations. Several causes have conspired to render me diffident of yielding myself up to the first serious attachment I ever formed; but on mature—very mature reflection, I am satisfied that no harm can ensue from my addressing yourself, and learning from your own mouth, whether there is any reason why I

should be denied the privileges of having a chance for your favour? I have seen you every day for some weeks, and I should be unworthy of the honour I aspire to, were I not entirely candid, and to confess, that I saw you at first with suspicion. But on comparing your whole demeanour, the little I have heard you utter, and the expression of your speaking face, with the persons who had given hints which were injurious to the character of your temper, and of that integrity which involves in it the peace and honour of our sex, I was thoroughly satisfied, that they had not capacity sufficient for the comprehension of so pure a mind as you possess. But on one point I was essentially staggered, and on that I refer to yourself; I mean, a reported engagement to my brother. Had that alone been asserted, I might have given credit to the report, but hearing of other predilections, of which there did not appear the slightest feasible proof, one assertion so completely neutralised another, as to make me discredit the whole.

“ I am aware that there is great boldness in this statement; yet what can I do? From the incoherent and disjointed accounts I have heard, my own conclusion is, that you have

yet made no election, and although it is great presumption in me to aspire, where there can be no doubt that many with better pretensions in every respect have sued in vain, yet, as taste is arbitrary and capricious, why should I not at least give myself a hearing? I have sometimes dared to flatter myself, that though your manners have been at once reserved and distant, still that to me they have not been decidedly repulsive. That you are not happy is self-evident, and—shall I be honest?—Yes; should we ever be more than acquaintances, it is right; and should we not, better have truth than that cold-hearted politeness which tends only to a universal masquerading. To be honest, then, they tell me that your unhappiness proceeds from bad temper! Love, it is said, is blind; yet I have so sedulously sought to have the eyes of my reason open, and, though unnoticed, have now observed you so much, that I am convinced your want of that buoyant joyfulness of face and manner, which should be predominating and apparent in one so young and so favoured by nature and fortune, can proceed only from the want of all intellectual sympathy. Pardon me, for your friends are selected by your mother, but indeed they are

not like you; and instead of having observed in you any symptom of bad temper, I have wondered at your self-command, on being often selected as the butt of low wit and wretched sarcasm. Should you be disengaged, as I earnestly hope you are, and should I be the person on whom the lot falls, I might say, that my happiness could not have in it any alloy. But where is that mortal happiness to be found? In the first place, I have very little more than lieutenant's pay to offer; and in the next, I must feel a pang on my brother's account. Yet if he is not your choice, why should *I*, more than another, shrink from endeavouring to possess so valuable a prize? I throw myself on your forbearance for my excessive plainness; and on your good-nature for having presumed that time and assiduity may give me a claim to your regard. I am, with the highest respect, my dear Miss Fortescue,

‘ Your devoted friend,

‘ J. STANHOPE.’

“ I wrote, said Mrs Stanhope, what you found inclosed, and which I shall read to you, as it was so hurriedly scrawled, although not in reality the production of haste, that I fear you could scarcely make it out:—

“ I have considered your letter, or rather, the manner in which I ought to act, very deeply; and in saying this, you may perhaps read, what was in truth a secret to myself, that you are the only person I have yet seen, who could have called forth any other reflexions in regard to a reply, than in what manner to couch a civil and not ungrateful refusal. I shall endeavour to imitate your own candour, and believe me, that the esteem which I had been unconsciously cherishing for you, is greatly increased by the plain and honest manner in which you write. I am aware that my first step should be to lay your letter before my mother; but I revolt from its being handed round the circle by which she is too constantly environed; and indeed I do not see that I have a right to subject you to such a tribunal. I am grieved to seem thus disrespectful to my mother, but it is altogether unavoidable. With the best dispositions, she has, from some causes which I can scarcely explain, been led into estrangement from me; and a jealousy has been fostered by a set of little-minded people, who repay hospitality by seeking to feed a mind already prejudiced with food for complaint, conjecture, and discontent. Probably my own fastidiousness is the root of

the evil; but I had no one to tell me that my mother meant no unkindness, while yet too young to know it of myself; and it is the bane of excessive delicacy of feeling, to be nearly as incapable of understanding its absence in another, as it is for that other to comprehend all its demands. Am I to blame for this? Perhaps so; for as the disposition seems rare, it cannot be that approved of by the Deity. But such I am; and it is fit that any one who thinks of cultivating an esteem for me should know my faults.

“ I frankly confess, that I feel gratified by your wish for accurate information in regard to the state of my affections. Your brother first saw me under circumstances of most peculiar distress. He rendered me a service; I was grateful, but nothing more; unless, indeed, an admiration of features, which I think no one can withhold, and an unqualified fear of his authoritative manner, might be called more. I was shocked when I found that he felt a preference for me, and prompt and decided in declining his addresses, which peculiar circumstances rendered but too public, and placed beyond any pretext for doubt, even in an enemy. It is equally well known to all here,

that I have been very far from encouraging the attentions, far less, if less could be, the addresses of any one; and that I have as quickly as possible given a negative to every proposal for my hand. But what farther can I say? I am young, and I suppose, in a legal sense, not entitled to invite guests to the house of my mother; and all I can venture to say is, that I am happy to find there was no unkind cause for the discontinuance of your visits. I am, &c.' ”

“ They are not what I should have fancied love-letters to be,” said Mr Ashburn; “ there is a plainness, an honesty, and simplicity in the first, and a wise discreetness in the last, which I had understood to be in general foreign to epistles of that kind. I much admire the modesty with which you permit his visits, and the—I would almost say—intuitive skill, with which you leave him to guess that he had made some impression in his favour. In short, I am pleased with both letters, and I should anticipate a life of felicity for two young people who commenced it with so much circumspection.”

“ It is not easy to anticipate anything with certainty, in a life which is at the mercy of so many contingent circumstances, that no wisdom can foresee, no caution prevent. Mr

John Stanhope renewed his visits, and was received, at first, with shyness only by the person who saw him with delight. Sincere and manly in all his actions, he made no secret of his choice; and I could see no reason whatever for affecting reserve. We saw no necessity for clandestine proceedings, and although every appearance of ostentatious regard was avoided on each side, yet no secret was made of mutual attachment.

“ We were eyed at first with surprise, next with malignity, and at last, on my mother’s part, with determined disapprobation. Resolved in future not to be the slave of caprice, when I could in some measure counteract it, I spoke to my mother on the subject of Mr Stanhope’s partiality towards me, and said, I should be sorry to encourage any person of whom she disapproved, but that I was aware he enjoyed her esteem and respect, and that, therefore, I had felt no compunction on the subject. My mother expressed decided and unqualified disapprobation, alleging his small fortune as an objection on his part, and my previous engagement with his brother on mine. To the first I replied that no final step would be taken until I was of age; and of the last I gave a decided denial, and referred

her to Captain Stanhope himself. I suppose her friends pressed this interrogation; for a letter was despatched, and an answer received in six months, in which Captain Stanhope acquitted me of the charge, but declared that he never would forgive his brother for interfering where he knew his affections were engaged, and thus for ever cutting him off from a chance which every man has while the object of his regard remains unmarried; and he added, ‘while I live he has my most fervent curse.’

“We had long before this left the Isle of Wight, and returned to my mother’s house, and Mr Stanhope had sailed for the North American station. I had become more and more an object of distaste to my mother. Before the event of Mr Stanhope paying his addresses to me, her feelings in regard to me had been chiefly, or, I dare say, entirely of a negative kind, but now they wore a decided aspect. She turned from me with an aversion which she did not seek to conceal, and perhaps it was owing to her peculiar calmness of disposition, that she did not rather seek to display it. Her whole faculties were now centered in Georgina; by degrees, her old friends seemed first objects of indifference or inattention to her, and next evidently

in her way; engagements were postponed, or got quit of altogether, until a total revolution took place in our domestic arrangements, and a system of rigid economy succeeded to our late profusion. I have often looked back with amazement on the curious changes which took place in the conduct, if not in the character, of a person so calm, that one would hardly have been justified in foretelling, ten years before, that such things could happen. And I have felt, in studying my mother's character, an awful warning to myself, and read the necessity of having laid down a fixed and determined mode of acting, desiring to have the capability of accommodating to imperious necessity, but the power of resisting the invitations of mere caprice or weariness.

“As my mother had a handsome fortune of her own, and entirely at her disposal, no one could blame or censure her late mode of living, which certainly had greatly exceeded in expense that in my father's life time. The change was altogether unimportant to me; indeed, at first, I hoped, in having my mother more to myself, that I should regain her affections; but she was so absorbed in schemes for the improvement of

Georgina, and in plans of economy, that all my advances were disregarded, and I resolved once more to go on in an even tenor, and leave events to chance."

"There you were partly right and egregiously wrong. What is chance? There is no such thing. Not a sparrow falleth to the ground but with permission. It is a lax mode of thinking on this subject, that engenders all the evils of life. We talk of an even tenor; that is right; but when we fancy that the events in the destiny of man are left as baseless as the feather which flutters in the air, we resemble an anchor without a cable. For in not always acknowledging an actuating Great Cause, we are bereft of that actuating grace, which is to render us properly efficient in this life, and secure us from being worse than a sunken load in the next. And in a more philosophical light, it is as vague and absurd as is the general tone of unthinking conversation; but this, in females more especially, springs entirely from an aimless education. But I beg your pardon—yet I am giving you the strongest proof I can of my esteem, for it is only the wise who can bear to be thought wrong. But I could not with a safe conscience

let you talk of fate like an ancient heathen, who, by the by, deserve no reprobation on that score, since the completion was not come."

"I stand corrected," said Mrs Stanhope, "and indeed feel that I have been poorly instructed with regard to all that you deem essential."

"Ah! do not say *you*. Beware of that dangerous liberality, as it is termed, and which has been of late but too much elevated upon the shoulders of, or rather placed in contradistinction to, a spurious zeal, which at one time puts me in mind of the spume, and at others of the dregs, of the pure juice of the vine. Mr D'Alembert, I understand, preached a sermon, some weeks since, upon the subject of liberality, which is now as mischievous to Protestantism, as the licentiousness of Luther was to Catholicity. But as Luther and his followers set free the religious world from moral restraints, and chiefly, by laughing at celibacy, paved the way for that particular vice, which has overrun our land as the Goths and Vandals formerly did the rich and fertile countries of the smiling south, so is this liberality setting free the mind to roam at large, unshackled, unbridled, unrestrained, in the deceitful meads of doubt, conjecture, and finally,

of utter disbelief.”—He paused, and after a respectful silence, Mrs Stanhope went on.

“ I discovered that my mother had been seized with an inordinate desire to render my sister’s fortune very large by the time she should come of age ; and that she had resolved to confine her expenses to her jointure of two hundred pounds a year, and our board of a like sum each. This income, she soon found, far exceeded her demands, according to the rigid system she had laid down ; so that she might reasonably expect Georgina’s fortune, when she should be twenty-one, to be at least fifty thousand pounds—I mean, upon the supposition that she was to inherit my mother’s accumulated property, which no one doubted. I never felt the slightest concern upon this subject, for my own fortune of five hundred a-year, and the accumulation of two hundred per annum for ten years, were fully adequate to all my wishes, and I knew that Mr Stanhope was moderate in his. But when Captain Stanhope’s letter arrived, I was indeed very unhappy. The curse of a brother, though greatly short in its awfulness to that of a parent, was still dreadful, especially as I knew that John held his brother in great veneration, being con-

siderably younger, and having for the last six years of his life, at a period when impressions are more strong and enduring than at any other of a man's existence, been entirely under his guidance. My mother presented me the letter with a severity and sternness of aspect which six months before I should have held incompatible with her mild features, and asked me, 'If I would still persist in my engagement?' I replied, that I certainly should, for that unreasonable conduct in one person could never justify a breach of faith in another. I instantly communicated the contents to Mr John Stanhope, intreating him to feel at entire liberty to act as his duty to his brother might direct. He replied, that his duty to his brother, in a case where his brother had no claim, could not come in contact with what he owed to a person whose affections he had sought and won. This seemed reasonable, and however much grieved at the cruel but inefficient malediction, we continued to hold our engagement sacred. Time wore away. Captain Stanhope went to India; we heard no more from him, but I learnt from his brother, when he came to take me from my mother's house, that he had received three or four letters breathing an irrevocable resent-

ment. We took a neat cottage at —, where I established myself with a couple of servants, and received occasional visits from Mr Stanhope, who got the command of a dispatch schooner, which sailed betwixt that place and Halifax.

CHAPTER XI.

“ OUR next neighbour was a retired East-India Captain, a widower, whose family consisted of one daughter, who lived with him, and one son, a midshipman in the British navy, and at the time I speak of, upon the Brazilian station. The young lady was about my own age, and as her father’s manners were rough and repulsive, she led a very retired life. She did not seek my acquaintance in the usual manner, and it was inconsistent with etiquette that I should seek her’s. Our gardens were separated by a high wall, with a door of communication, in case of the neighbours wishing for familiar intercourse ; but at that time it was locked, and the key in the hands of the landlord. We could each walk in our garden unseen by the other, but our bed-room windows afforded too full a view for the lovers of retirement, and I often gazed upon Clara —— for an hour, as, with rather a

melancholy air, she amused herself in planting, training, or gathering her flowers. Probably, in proportion to my love for Mr Stanhope, and the deprivation that all my social feelings experienced on his departure after his short visits, was my ardent desire for a female friend. This was a comfort which I had never enjoyed; and as my eyes would strain themselves over the fine full form and dark Roman face of Clara, my heart would beat with a most painful and ardent desire for her acquaintance. I had heard, or rather read, of the fluttering hopes and fears of love; but these I had never experienced, for the conduct of Mr Stanhope had been like the noon-day sun, clear, open, and unequivocal, leaving no room for the petty mysteries and childish explanations which fill so many pages of love-tales. But I felt an anxiety to become acquainted with Clara, which, although my heart has been; and still is, much disposed to seek the delights of friendship, I never experienced either before or since. Indeed, I made a determination that I never should, and I have often fancied, I dare say, through the mere weakness of grief, that there was something sinful in the solicitude with which I would watch her appearance in the morning, my re-

gret if her stay in the garden was short, my disappointment if her keen, speaking, but yet retiring black eye, did not steal a look at my window, and the perfect security with which I counted upon her re-appearance in good weather, at eleven o'clock.

“ Six weeks passed on in this way, when Mr Stanhope came into port, and perceiving my wish to become acquainted with Miss —— (it is needless to name her) he got a friend to introduce him to Captain ——, and an intimacy took place immediately. I was not disappointed in Clara's endowments, nor in the amiability and the general worth of her character; but I found that her heart was in a great measure pre-occupied, for she had a lover. You may say, I had a husband, and why was my heart not pre-occupied? But the cases were totally different. With respect to my husband, I was in a state of entire confidence. We met as often as it was possible; we corresponded regularly, and, in short, I reposed upon his affection as upon a rock. But it was otherwise with Clara. There was in her disposition a dash of jealousy, which made her watchful over every look and action of her lover, and at once prevented her perfect satisfaction either in his society or that of a

friend. While my eyes beamed with delight on seeing her, and my heart overflowed with all the openness of a devoted friendship, you could see her eye rest upon the ground, as if revolving in her mind some doubtful case; then she would sigh, start, or make an effort to seem interested in your discourse. But I was drawn to her by some strange fatality, and even occasional fits of indifference to me seemed but to whet my regard. Her lover's assiduity appeared at last, however, to overcome all her little doubts, and in proportion as she became more easy, satisfied, and confiding on his account, so I seemed to have a much larger share in her affections. Indeed, it is the very essence of true love to enlarge the heart and ennoble every kindly feeling, and so it seemed with Clara.

“The time was fixed for her marriage; a house was taken near her present place of abode; and being certain that her friendship would be less capricious when her love was more secure, I looked forward with great satisfaction to an event which I hoped would make her entirely happy. Hitherto she had been the doubtful, mistrustful, anxious mistress; and Mr. — the devoted, confiding, solicitous

lover; but all of a sudden, about a year after our marriage, and when Florence was two months old, they seemed to have exchanged characters, and it was not until she had real cause to doubt his affections, that she seemed willing to construe his most indifferent actions into tokens of love. But, alas! no eye could be shut to the sad change; he became cold in his manners, and his visits were barely continued. She had been open enough in disclosing her little groundless doubts, but now her heart seemed shut, and I thought, ready to break, as she watched his every look, and seemed willing to be glad upon the slightest token of regard. I felt extremely uneasy about her, but notwithstanding our intimacy, I found it impossible to venture upon a single question on the subject, being one of peculiar delicacy, and her own manners, though calm and inert, yet were such as repelled, rather than invited, familiarity.

“One day, about a month after the commencement of this change in Mr —, Clara and I were alone in my house; she had sat silent for some time, but regarding me with that fixed stare, which may either proceed from excessive attention or from entire absence of

mind, she suddenly exclaimed, ‘ I have heard it said, that a pretty woman never looks so interesting as six weeks or two months after she has been a mother for the first time ; that there is a transparency in her skin, a lustre in her eye, and a beaming satisfaction over her whole air and manner, which is never to be seen again.’ She sighed deeply, and then added, “ It is a month to-day since we drank tea with you. I have often thought of your face on that night.” She uttered this in so deep and melancholy a tone, that I could not answer her as I felt inclined to do, upon the utter groundlessness of such a supposition, and I rather chose to wait the current of her own thoughts, and let her lead the conversation, not without a hope that she would relieve her burdened heart by a full disclosure of her now too well-founded fears. But she said nothing more, and retired without speaking, and I have no doubt in tears.

“ This happened about six o’clock, in a beautiful summer’s evening. I felt unusually melancholy ; Clara seemed to date the commencement of her misery from an evening on which I had been uncommonly happy. Mr Stanhope had come into port for a few days, and the lovers,

who were very soon to become man and wife, drank tea with us for the first time after the birth of Florence. I could not define my thoughts; I felt mortified and ready to weep; the latter I could easily explain, as in sympathy with Clara; but why the former? What had I done? I could not tax a single thought, far less an act; yet her looks, her tones, and a something in her air as she went out, cut me to the very soul. Just as I was about to follow her and implore a full and entire confidence, the maid brought in Florence. The child smiled, extended her arms, and soliciting my attention, I took her from her nurse, and, instead of following my friend, thought I would divert my melancholy by a walk in the garden.

“Being soon fatigued with the unusual exertion of carrying Florence, I proceeded to an arbour, and, to my surprise, found there the lover of Clara. He was sitting with his hands clasped over his eyes, and was evidently absorbed in deep and bitter thought. Clara’s words rushed upon my recollection, and my first impulse was to retire; but hearing my step, he looked up and starting to his feet, exclaimed, ‘O! I am glad you are come—it is from you only that I can expect relief.’ I was astonished

by this address; and, somewhat alarmed by the energy of his manner, felt irresolute whether or not to sit down on the bench to which he pointed; but not dreaming of any impropriety, and perhaps actuated by a hope of serving my friend, I seated myself.

“ ‘ You must not wonder,’ said he, ‘ at seeing me here, and I trust you will forgive the liberty, but for some days my wish to converse with you has been almost irrepressible. I called half an hour since, and was told that Clara was with you. Unwilling to meet her at that moment, and yet reluctant to withdraw from the premises, I came almost unconsciously here, and now that we have met, you must give me a patient hearing. I am not a man liable to sudden gusts of passion, and possibly on that account, when moved to suspicion or anger, the one is less irradicable, and the other more deep and bitter than with a man whose temperament exposes him to frequent ebullitions. But, indeed I do not think any apology necessary for either the depth of my suspicion, or the violence of my wrath, and the bitterness of my grief. You know that I have been engaged for two years to Miss ———; you know how I have loved her, and that if I suffered some uneasiness now and

then because her tenderness easily took alarm at imagined slights on my part, yet I was flattered by that very excess of love which seemed to be the cause of a somewhat inordinate demand upon my unwavering regard. For myself, I solemnly declare, that as I never gave her any real cause of mistrust, so I never for one moment was under the influence of it, in regard to her. You recollect the night on which we drank tea with you, and how happy we all were. Little did I then think, that it was the last night of joy that I should perhaps ever taste. Next day I was engaged to dine with a party of friends. We sat late, or rather early, and with that feeling natural to a man in love, after getting quit of my companions, instead of going straight home, I chose to go a mile out of my way, in order that I might pass by the house which contained my future wife. I walked on in that slow manner which a man delights in when his thoughts are pleasantly occupied. The night was rather dark, but just as I approached the door at the bottom of Mr ——'s garden, I imagined that I saw a man leaning against it. Nothing but the circumstance of his being on her father's premises, at least upon the skirts of them, could have induced me to remain one

moment, but as it was, I found my steps arrested, and I stood still, resolved on waiting to see whether the person should withdraw. I had not at that moment a sensation of jealousy,—indeed it is not my natural propensity,—but any man in my situation would have done the same thing, and I believe that had I passed on I should have been haunted during the night, with the idea that Clara had been robbed or murdered. He remained without moving; I became breathless, and yet I declare my anxiety wore no shape whatever. I once thought of going forward, but delicacy detained me, for he might wonder why I was there, as I did why he should be fixed to that spot. I am persuaded we stood ten minutes, and if I may judge from his immoveable appearance, he laboured under an anxiety similar to mine, but no doubt having a clearly defined cause or object. Unable to bear it any longer, I moved slowly forward, and as he was standing with his back towards me, I could do so unperceived. On coming near, I saw that his ear was closely applied to the key hole of the gate, with his hat pushed back for the purpose, as it seemed, of listening. This appeared strange, and again I paused, when to my amazement I heard the key turn in the lock, when the

door opened, and a female in white rushed into his arms. Love told me this could be no other than Clara; I sprung forward, when the sudden noise acting upon them, they retired and turned the key in an instant. The earth yawning at my feet could have produced no such sensation as that which overcame me. I became sick, leaned against the wall for support, and in the next instant thought of scaling it, but its height rendered this impracticable; and, besides, to what purpose? The man was not only voluntarily admitted, but had been expected. I loitered about until the morning light rendered a longer stay imprudent, and I returned home with a heavy heart, and a melancholy foreboding of evil. I considered, and reconsidered—was now in a paroxysm of rage, and the next moment blaming my own jealous temper, and asking myself if there was no female in the house but Clara? Might it not be a servant, in which case it was incumbent on me to inform Mr ———, or rather Clara, for you know he is so violent, that he unavoidably shuts himself out from all confidence. Then again, the air of the female, to my imagination, was more genteel than that of a servant—indeed it was no other than that of Clara. Reason had no

sway over me ; and what could reason hold forth in such a case ? The man was not her father—her brother had sailed from Gibraltar to India, and this person could be no other than a lover. I made up my mind to call early, and tell her what I had witnessed. I went—it was a full half hour before she made her appearance, and when she did her whole air was altered. She was not cold in her manner, but she was constrained ; there was a repressed flutter about her, and she seemed afraid to raise her eyes. I felt an instantaneous estrangement ; and indignant at the very idea of asking an explanation, I soon left her. It is probable that had she guessed at my imperfect knowledge, she would have given me some false information ; but ignorant of that, her own guilt must have prevented any surprise at my conduct.

“ ‘ No, no,’ said I ; ‘ you must be wrong ; it could not be Clara ; she is even too proud to sin.’ ”

Mr Ashburn sighed, and muttered something.

“ ‘ No,’ said Mr ——— vehemently, ‘ you are mistaken—hear me out :—I returned home in an agony, and after a wretched day, resolvèd to watch all night at the same detested spot. Wrapping myself up in a dark coat, I took my

station, walking backward and forward near the garden door. I passed some hours, divided between hope, fear, and a horrible paroxysm of jealousy. One o'clock had just struck, when, by an instinctive feeling, as if that hour had something portentous in it—and surely so it has—I approached the garden gate, and fancied that I heard low voices on the other side. They came close, and I felt assured, though I heard no words, that the tones were those of Clara; I knew they were. The speakers stood for some minutes; the time seemed an eternity, yet I believe that I dreaded its termination. I stood in the angle of the door, indifferent as to whether I was seen or not, and I saw—Heavens! do I live to tell it?—her arms thrown round his neck, and after what must have been a fervent embrace, they parted. The young man, for I am sure he was young, passed me with his handkerchief at his eyes. I saw her look after him, and I heard, yes, I heard her sob bitterly. No words can give you the most distant idea of what I felt. You may say, 'Why did I not speak instantly?' I cannot tell; I shall always regret it—I ought to have seized the youth, but I was confounded and spell-bound. Besides, for what should I have done

so? and I believe that I unconsciously acted upon the positive fact, that she could henceforward be nothing to me. But I have a persuasion, perhaps falsely—and I owe you an apology for the mere imagination,—but I cannot divest myself of the opinion, that you must be in her confidence. Tell me, I conjure you, and end this horrible, fearful suspense.’

“ ‘Supposing her to be what you imagine, you may well apologise for thinking that I can possibly be in her confidence,’ said I. ‘But this is neither time nor occasion for pique, and I most cordially forgive and more than sympathise with you. But I am certain that there must be some mistake in this affair: no false delicacy shall prevent me from knowing thoroughly the whole root and extent of this mystery, and I have not a doubt that Clara will be found as free from blame, as pure and spotless, as that infant.’ In short, I said so much of her worth and honour, and of the entire possibility, and certain probability, of some mistake, that in the fervour of awakened hope, he seized my hand, and at the same time said, ‘O! make all this real, and be my guardian angel!’

At that moment Clara stood before us; she gave a loud scream, and exclaimed, “I see

it all—cruel, base, false woman!’ She rushed from the arbour; Mr ——— followed, while I, shocked, agitated, and affected, seemed for some time rivetted to the spot. When I recovered, I carried Florence into the house, and going instantly to Clara’s, begged an interview; but was told that she was taken suddenly ill. I ventured to ask if Mr ——— had been admitted, and was answered in the negative. My soul sickened. I had read fearful stories of jealousy, and indeed our public prints hold up but too many examples of cutting short our troubles when we fancy them past our endurance. I knew that Clara, though a woman of great sense and refinement, was of a quick and irritable temper; and I was aware that her high sense of honour (for I never for one instant believed that she had swerved) would aggravate my supposed guilt in her eyes, and that probably she would spurn at continuing in a world which contained such a monster as I saw she imagined me to be. I shall never forget the agony of that moment—no, never. I recollected the suspicion which had, by a strange fatality, been cast over me by my mother and all her friends, and I was aware that any report, however bad, would be credited

of me. My husband too—much as he loved me, yet he might not be proof against such a story as could easily be fabricated from what Clara saw and heard, unless she could be prevailed upon to give us a candid hearing. I stood for a few moments gazing on Florence, in a state of the most sickening despair; but I was quickly aware that not a moment should be lost, and writing with all the energy that the love of character and of my friend could inspire, and with the speed of lightning, an account of what had passed, I carried in the letter and desired Clara's maid to present it immediately. The girl returned, and told me that her lady's door was locked and that she would give no answer to her entreaties for admission. It is strange that I should have had so sure a presentiment of her fate. I flew to her door and prayed for admission; but I prayed in vain, no answer was given. I flew to her father, who was a violent man and had a profound contempt for females; so that when I begged him to force admission to Clara's room, he said he had something else to do, and asked what woman's squall this was? I was too deeply interested to care for his anger or his oaths, and seizing his arm, implored him, as he valued

his daughter's life, to force open her door, for that I knew she had been vexed, and that I was alarmed about her; but he turned upon his heel and left the house muttering something about women. I then asked for the footman, but was told that he had been sent by Miss —— with a letter to the post-office. It instantly occurred to me that the letter was for Mr Stanhope, and my first impulse was to run and demand it; but my fears for Clara overcame all others, and I dispatched one of the girls for Mr ——, her unfortunate lover. He obeyed my summons immediately (for he had continued to walk in front of the house), and stating my terrors, he instantly forced open the door. Good God! what was the state of my mind when I found my poor friend lying in bed, in a deep and profound torpor, and an empty vial on her dressing-table. In short, she was gone! No medical aid could restore her, and without even a shadow of real blame on my part, I saw that I must be stigmatised as —— but I need not particularize.

“Next day, I asked Clara's footman if he knew to whom the letter was directed that he had received from his mistress? and was informed to ‘Mr Stanhope,—sloop of war, Halifax.’

I made no attempt at recalling the letter, which indeed would have been impossible, but as the packet was not to sail till the following Saturday, I wrote a full account of all that had happened, and however detrimental to the memory of Miss ———, I insisted on her lover doing the same. Mr Stanhope of course received all the three letters at once, but he was too confiding in me to suffer his mind for one moment to entertain a doubt of the statement I sent him. But it was not so with the father of Clara. Indeed, combining all the circumstances, I am not surprised that his prejudice should have been strong against both Mr ——— and myself. His story of seeing a gentleman at the garden gate of Captain ———, and of his admission, he totally discredited, and this only gave weight to what he called his other proofs, viz. my agitation, my fears, and expressions dropped by Clara, and heard by the servants as she rushed to her own room; Mr ——— having been seen to go from Clara's house into the arbour of our garden; my own entrance immediately after, and a thousand groundless conjectures of his own. In short, I was in one hour a blighted, blasted creature. Mr ———'s love for Clara returned, and while he reproached himself as being her

murderer, it was not likely that at the expence of her memory he should exhibit the story publicly in order to exculpate me. Indeed, what could be done? Neither Mr Stanhope nor myself were more inclined to cast a blot on the memory of poor Clara than her lover, but if we had been so disposed, we were both satisfied that to offer explanations to my mother or others, would only have been a gratuitous and useless degradation.

“In two years after, it was discovered (indeed I have no doubt it was known long before to Clara’s father) that his son had fought a duel on the eve of his departure from Gibraltar for India; had killed his antagonist; and dreading the disagreeable and doubtful results of a court-martial, with the likelihood of being broken and disgraced, he made his escape the same night, arrived in a short time at ——; and having apprised Clara, with the most earnest and solemn command of secrecy, he was admitted, and again departed, as I have already told you. The whole evil might be traced to the state of unnatural and degrading terror in which both son and daughter lived of their father. When those circumstances came to our knowledge, Mr Stanhope, Mr —— and my-

self, presented a joint and most earnest request to Capt. ——— that he would allow all the particulars to be printed; but we supplicated to a man who was as insensible to the claims of character as to all the tender ties of life. It seems, the young man, having obtained a little money from Clara, found a vessel ready to sail for the West Indies, where he has been a successful planter. The moment Mr Stanhope learnt his address, he wrote him a full and correct statement of all that had passed, and conjured him to write to my mother and Captain Stanhope. But his reply was, ‘Let the ashes of the dead rest. I know who have been the real sufferers.’

“But I have lived to see too many instances of the utter impossibility of getting those who are but slightly concerned, to give any consideration at all to what is of the last, or even vital importance to the reputation of another. There is generally an absolute obtuseness on points which involve in them all that is most dear and sacred to our friends. But how sharp, how deep, how keen the propensity to discover all that can tarnish and destroy reputation. This, I do think, is the worst trait in human nature, because there is not, that I can perceive, the slightest

temptation to it. I cannot detain you, nor harrow up my own feelings, by narrating a series of events, not again fatal to others, but all tending to asperse a character, which had by the sad partiality of a parent been always laid open to suspicion. My mother, all her friends, and Captain Stanhope, believed me to be a cunning and quiet woman of intrigue, while the whole frame of my mind, and the whole tenor of my conduct, gave the lie to their assertions.

“My mother placed all her alienable property in the hands of a specious adventurer, in the hope of its soon being doubled; but he first became bankrupt, and next absconded, by which means she lost every farthing, and all hope of recovering what it was surmised he still held in his hands. Poor woman! this chagrined her so much, that she died soon after of a broken heart, having first consigned Georgina to the care of a lady whom she deemed a fit guide. My spirits were now considerably undermined. War raged—Mr Stanhope was seldom able to visit us, and I discovered that his brother, upon the plea of Clara’s story, and in defence, as he said, of the family honour, placed over me a perpetual spy. Indeed, he rather made a boast of this, and yet he had, and still has, the ef-

frontery to visit me whenever it suits his convenience, and delights in nothing so much as going over the whole events of my life.

“But let me get over this sad account, and come to the saddest of it all. In 1813, the final blow was given—Mr Stanhope fell in battle, and I was left a solitary being indeed. Captain Stanhope is the natural and sole guardian of Florence, and, as I said before, visits us occasionally, for the chief purpose, I think, of shaking his terrors over our heads. He is a mass of prejudices, but of them all, those against Popery and the people of Ireland are the most virulent.”

Mrs Stanhope paused; and Mr Ashburn; either curious to know more of Mr ———, or anxious to avoid discussing the principal objects of Captain Stanhope’s ireful hatred, expressed a wish to learn what had become of the lover of Clara; adding, “I think you have never named him.”

“No,” said she, “as the story had in it so sad a result, I think it better that, as far as I can at least, the names should be consigned to oblivion. Mr ——— was a physician, and in very good practice, but after that disastrous affair, and probably out of respect for me, he went and settled in London. He wrote a letter of condolence,

on hearing that I had become a widow ; but as it was my wish never to have the slightest intercourse with him, I sent no reply ; but he found, however, occasion to want some information from —, for which he applied to me, and various little occurrences followed in train, which led to an occasional exchange of letters, and in a year or two he paid me a visit, and on his return to London, made me a formal offer of his hand. But I gave so decided a refusal, that the matter dropped, and I have since heard of his marriage.

“No—I could never think of again changing my name, and all I have desired is, to live in peace with my child, and to cherish the memory of my husband. I often look back upon the events which I have narrated, as upon a confused dream ; and my only consolation in this life is, a clear and unspotted conscience.”

“And it is a consolation, the want of which cannot be countervailed by the wealth of India—no, not by the very life of that dear child. You cannot know, as I do, the pangs of a mere speck on the conscience. I have seen the overwhelming power of conscious error, from a little falsehood to crimes of the deepest dye. And is it not fearful to think, that the more fre-

quent crime is, the less grief is manifested for it? How carefully then, Florence, should we guard against its first approach. And it is also an unspeakable comfort to reflect that your husband's conviction was a counterpart of your own self-satisfaction, upon that important and distressing subject."

"Yes; but although the dying and appalling words of Clara never excited in him a single doubt, or one spark of jealousy, yet, from the time of her death, there was a melancholy in our meetings and partings which we had never experienced before. I had, however unintentionally, been the cause of her death; my reputation had, to say the very least, a doubt, a shade cast upon it; my husband was seldom with me; I stood alone in the world, and I *felt* all my solitariness; for mine was, and is, a heart that clings with uncommon adhesion to the sympathies of life. He said himself that henceforward there was a sadness in my eye, a sorrow in my smile. Had he been always with me, this would have worn off; I should have been cheered by his society, and sustained by his countenance; but we met only to part, and parted with no certainty of ever meeting again. And, alas! too soon — but I cannot dwell on the theme,

and it avails not—all must be borne—and the gulph of time swallows all up.”

Mr Ashburn saw, that as Mrs Stanhope struggled to conceal her emotion, it was of a deep and solemn order. He knew not how to interrupt the silence which followed. Here he felt none of that authoritative right to which he was used, but that there stood betwixt them two barriers; on her part, that of fear lest he should entangle her child in the frightful and hated toils of Popery; on his, an apprehension that whatever friendship and esteem might offer, should be construed into artful baiting. “I will, notwithstanding,” thought he, “say what is natural to my disposition, whether originally mine or created by our faith, matters not; to do good is the object in view, temporally as well as spiritually;” and after such an interval as he deemed due to the train of Mrs Stanhope’s thoughts and feelings, he said, “You appear to be sadly in want of a real, disinterested friend—you may imagine that my object is the conversion of your daughter; but indeed, had no hint been given, so as to suggest a hope of that desirable event, I should still have been interested in *you*, and if my friendship, my support, in any case can be either consoling or useful, they are not only

at your service, but I shall feel great delight in giving one moment's comfort to a person who has been so much injured, and who stands alone in the world."

Mrs Stanhope expressed her gratitude for his offer, and they parted for that day, but with a promise on Mr Ashburn's part of seeing them again as soon as he possibly could.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

LONDON :

PRINTED BY C. AND W. REYNELL, BROAD STREET, GOLDEN SQUARE.



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